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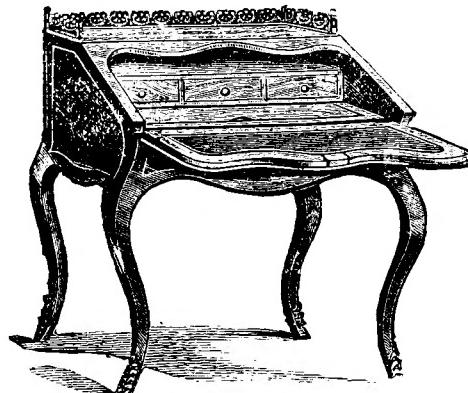
# THE HISTORY OF A WEEK



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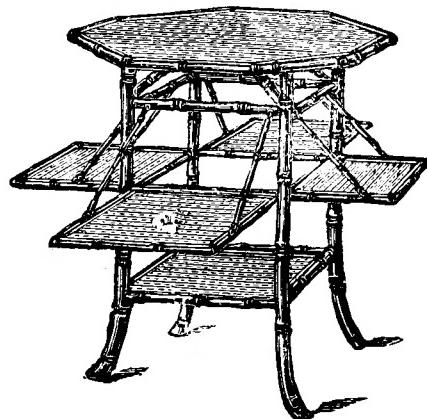
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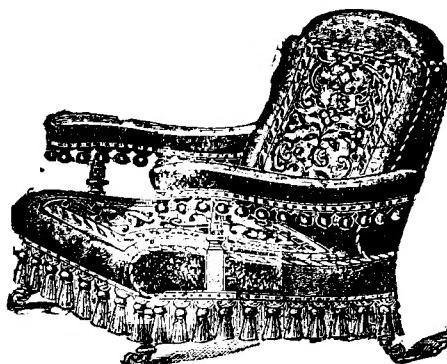


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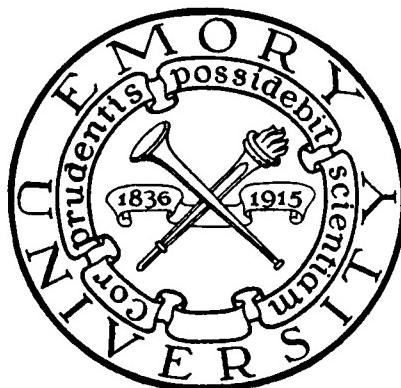
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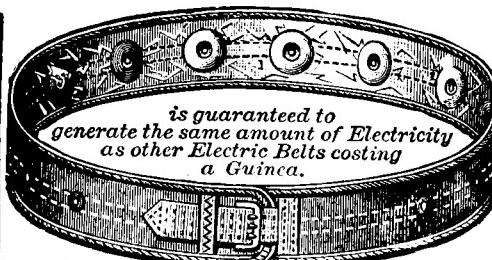
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THE  
HISTORY OF A WEEK

BY

L. B. WALFORD

AUTHOR OF "MR. SMITH," "THE BABY'S GRANDMOTHER," "COUSINS,"  
"TROUBLESOME DAUGHTERS," "PAULINE," "NAN,"  
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## THE HISTORY OF A WEEK.

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### L

#### GODDESSES THREE.

"Ah! but the third one! Ah! the third!  
She only lifted her beautiful eyes—  
Uttered she not one single word—  
And yet it was she who bore off the prize."

BETWIXT the fitful blasts of autumn and the still more fierce and fatal storms of winter, there comes not infrequently to the denizens of North Britain a season of comparative repose, a sullen cessation of hostilities as it were, on the part of the elements, not, indeed, to be taken as an earnest of good things to come, not to be relied on as bail for any future tranquillity, but rather, it

must be confessed, to be regarded with suspicion and uneasiness by the weatherwise, who are prone to consider the blandishments by which for a brief season they are surrounded, in the same light as they would the smiles of a traitor, who in his heart is pondering by what means he may best devise the ruin and wreckage on which his treacherous soul is bent.

Just such a scoundrel is the month of November to the Scottish coasts.

Dull and cheerless are the skies above, sternly responsive are the waters beneath, grimly meditative lies the land, as though awaiting in speechless inactivity the long months of dreariness and desertion which loom in the immediate prospect, but a sombre silence enchains them all—neither winds blow, nor rain falls, nor waves roar; and wrapped in one unbroken mantle of grey, Nature herself seems sunk in a profound and hopeless stupor.

Such a state of things cannot fail to affect even the hardiest nerves and the sweetest tempers ; and accordingly it must be owned that the inhabitants of regions subject to such periodical influences are, as a rule, each after his or her fashion, more or less affected. The mild and timid are depressed ; the irritable become self-assertive and contradictory ; the overbearing grow intolerable : yawning and lassitude prevail, weariness rather than fatigue is apt to forestall the hour of bed-time ; the smallest affairs assume importance ; trifling intelligence is eagerly passed on ; and the chief event of the day is the arrival of the post-bag.

'Twas even so one dull and dreary November in the district of Awonry, in one of the three—we need not specify which—counties, which go together by the common name of Galloway.

Was it not, then, the happiest thought in the world on the part of one of the best of

women and hostesses to give a ball, a real genuine, old-fashioned pipe-and-fiddle ball, to the neighbourhood—and indeed to all the neighbourhoods within reach ; and was she not blessed and lauded, and metaphorically kissed and hugged, a dozen times a-day for the same, by all the bonnie lasses up hill and down dale, and across the weary wastes of Galloway ?

“ And to think that no one else had ever dreamed of doing such a thing before ! ” cried the blue-eyed Flora, the fairer of two fair daughters. “ A ball in November ! In mid-November ! And every one so glad to go ; and all so easy, now that it has once been thought of ! Who will follow suit ? Who will be the next ? Why not we ourselves ? If only papa—but papa is as cross as possible at being dragged out to-night, and talks about leaving Tom. I must say that considering how very little of his time our dear father bestows upon his son, he

is curiously anxious about his never being left alone. Poor Madeline ! she is the one to bear the brunt of that. It is too bad her staying to-night. Papa might have let her off——”

“ What nonsense you talk ! ” interrupted her sister, in accents of annoyance. “ You know as well as I do that papa’s real reason is about the horses. He does *not* like the carriage overcrowded, and one of the horses being lame——”

“ Lame ! Phoo ! ” cried Flora, gaily. “ Let them both be lame, so long as they can get along anyhow. *I* am not lame, I can tell you ! How we will dance ! What partners we will have ! And I—oh, I know who will be my chief one ! I don’t fancy my step goes with that of the Scottish knights, eh, Blanche ? ‘ Fee-fa-fum ! —I smell the smell of an Englishman ! ’ Never do you mind who he is. I shall give each one his turn, of course, and each one will

want a turn with me, especially since Madeline will not be there." Then, with a sudden fall in her voice, "Ah, poor Madeline! I am really sorry for poor Madeline."

"She had no need to stay," observed Blanche, ungraciously. "Papa only inquired who was to be at home, without in any way referring to Madeline, and she said—"

"Oh, you forget, my dear Blanche. There was another finger in the pie, believe me. Before papa ever opened his mouth, mamma had made up her mind on the subject: I knew it—and so did Madeline. When the dear good lady begins in her plaintive accents about the loneliness and deprivations of her beloved invalid, I know what she is up to. Then, as if she were terrified lest you or I should offer to remain—not that she need have been, in the slightest"—Blanche winced—"she immediately turned

the tap full on poor Maddy, and that just as papa entered the room.”

“ Well ? ”

“ Well ? Why, then, Maddy saw she was not to go, of course. Her doom was sealed ; papa’s signature on the one side, mamma’s on the other. She had not a chance—not the faintest, shadowiest ghost of a chance.”

“ Do you suppose she cared—much ? ”

Flora looked at her sister curiously. “ Why should I suppose at all about it ? If you ask me what I know, I can tell you pretty accurately—but it is as well not to ‘ suppose ’ on the subject. The thing is done—cart-ropes would not drag her there now ; and that being the case, the best thing we can do is to proceed to the enchanted spot ourselves, and enjoy it all to the top of our bent. There is philosophy, true philosophy, for you. I wish—yes, I really think I honestly wish that Madeline had been going with us, but as she is not——”

"As she is not," observed Blanche, "people will talk. Papa and mamma ought to think of that. I should have taken Madeline to-night at all hazards; and I did my best to make them understand—but they were both immovable. I know it is foolish; I know that ill-natured people will be sure to make disagreeable remarks, and it will be, 'Where is your cousin?' and 'What have you done with your cousin?' all night long, just as it was at the Ayr meeting. Don't you remember how we both vowed we would never go to any large gathering again without Madeline? It was so very disagreeable having it supposed that just because she was younger than either of us, and——"

"And prettier."

"Prettier? Nonsense. That had nothing to do with it. Besides it is not for us to say; it is certainly not for you or me to decide which is the prettiest. Some people

may admire Madeline's colouring—I do not myself; but still I am quite willing to allow that if you can get over her red hair——”

“Red hair! Fiddlesticks!” cried her sister, with a laugh. “I know what *I* would give to have such hair; and, if I am not mistaken, a good many others are in my case. My dear Blanche, do not, I beseech you, delude yourself. I don't. I confess candidly that, in point of face and figure, eyes, nose, mouth, and complexion, I am inferior to my poor, portionless cousin. There, can I put the bitter fact more bare-facedly? It will not break my heart, I assure you; furthermore, it will not injure my digestion; in fine, I do not care *that!*” with a snap of the fingers brisk enough to emphasise any amount of asseveration. “I love Madeline,” continued the speaker, who was in spirits to be even more than ordinarily good-natured. “I love Madeline, and

she may have all the admirers in the world, provided she does not steal from me my own particular favourite. If she were to commit that heinous offence, I should never forgive her—never, never, never!—and as it is just possible that, had she graced the ball this evening, she might have been tempted—or rather, *he* might have been tempted—I know he does think her pretty, for I asked him one day right out, and though he tried to put me off, he did not quite succeed; and, that being the case, I do really think it is very, very good of me to be sorry, and——”

“How you do run on! Your tongue has never ceased this whole day. Are you going to talk like that to-night?”

“I should, if I did not work off the steam a little first. Now what shall we do till dressing time? Don’t you think we might begin? We might at least come up-stairs and see the things put out. It must be time, or at least it ought to be time,—and,

time or not, positively I cannot wait longer. I have been waltzing round the dining-room table for the last twenty minutes, varying the entertainment by flights up-stairs to see Martin finishing off the very last touches in the work-room ; and the last time I went, she said another quarter of an hour would complete all she had to do. Don't you think it is a quarter of an hour ? I am sure it must be a quarter of an hour ! Blanche, if you love me, say it *is* a quarter of an hour—why, here's Madeline ! ” and a change, impossible to help observing, came over the speaker at the last few words. Suddenly she became grave.

“ Flora has just been wondering what o'clock it *is*, ” remarked Blanche ; who, it might have been perceived by the curious, had also altered the tone and style of her conversation, and sobered it down to an everyday hue. “ Have you any idea, Madeline ? ”

There was no answer, and both sisters simultaneously directed a glance of inquiry. Their cousin's face was partly hidden by a large, shady, garden hat, an ordinary hat enough; but somehow the same thought occurred at the same moment to Blanche and Flora—namely, that it was worn as a covering, that it would not have been put on that sombre, sunless day if a shade had not been specially desired.

"I have brought you in a few flowers from the greenhouse," said rather a low voice at last,—plainly Madeline had not heard the last question, but was full of a thought and purpose of her own. "There are scarcely any left, but Aunt Julia asked me to see what I could get."

"Thank you, dear. They are very nice indeed;" and "How good of you, Maddy! Oh yes, they will do beautifully!" exclaimed both the fair recipients in a breath, and with an eagerness which the small service scarcely

justified. “And you went out in the rain too !” added Flora, pathetically.

“The rain is over ; I liked going. When shall I come to dress your hair, Flora ?”

“Ah, you darling, and you are going to do that too ? You are the dearest creature —and to think that you are actually about to beautify me, and make me look as nobody else can, for Martin’s fingers are all thumbs when it comes to hairdressing——”

“And you know that it is really a pleasure to me.”

“Because you are so good. And, to be sure, ’tis a pity your fine talents should be wasted, for your own lovely curly locks need no hand of art ever to make them look sweeter than they do at this moment. Well, you needn’t hang your head ; can’t you stand half an inch of a compliment from a she-cousin ? What ever will you do when you come to go out into the world regularly ? That’s right ; she’s smiling. Now we are all right again, and

she shan't be done out of the next ball, I promise her—what, she's off!" The door closed.

"Do you know, Flora," said Blanche, looking round, with again that uneasy glance—"do you know I am afraid that Madeline really *does* care?"

"You had never supposed as much before," observed Flora, drily.

"So Madeline has come in with the flowers," observed a new voice in the doorway; "I met her outside. What a dear, useful girl she is, and always so sweet-tempered! I should have liked to take her tonight—but I daresay she will be quite as happy at home. And really she is so young that perhaps it is as well not to begin with balls just yet. What I shall do when I have to take you all about, and when there will be no one to stay with poor dear Tom, I am sure I do not know." And Lady Seaton, the mother of the two beauties, and aunt of the third, sighed plaintively.

“ You know, mamma, you encourage him,” said Blanche, bluntly. “ Tom never did seem to mind about being left alone until lately, but now that Madeline has come to live with us he has grown so exacting that it is quite ridiculous. He might just as well have let poor Maddy go to-night——”

But at this Lady Seaton at once roused herself.

“ ‘ Poor’ Maddy ! ” she echoed, with asperity. “ You can say ‘ poor’ Maddy, but neither you nor Flora ever think of your ‘ poor’ brother. You are ccncerned because she is to stay one night away from an amusement, but you do not care in the least that he is to be debarred all his life long from any. One would think a poor cripple, and such a sufferer, too, would be an object of pity and affection.”

“ Well, mamma, of course. But,” said Blanche, gloomily, “ I know it is of no use talking—but still I do wish you and papa

would just for once prevail on Tom to be less selfish. Madeline has been with him a great part of the day——”

“Dear girl, I know she has. Yes, she does appreciate my poor boy; but as for you, Blanche, his own sister, I must say you show very little of a sisterly spirit. Dear Madeline is my greatest comfort. What I should do without her now I hardly dare to think. So dependent on her as Tom has grown to be; for he said to me only just now that he *must* have her this evening—‘*must*’ was the very word he used; I could be quite jealous if I did not love him so much; I only wish him to have the one who pleases him best. Still I could grudge Madeline that being so necessary to him——”

“My poor mother!”—it was Flora who now spoke, and she had regained her light tone—“be thankful for such mercies as you possess. Tom does not spare you as it is, and to desire to be made further use of is,

if you will allow me to say so, a sheer flying in the face of Providence. Providence sent Maddy here for your relief, and you are quite right to appreciate the value of her services ; but, for goodness' sake, do not attempt to interfere with existing arrangements—or if you do, don't look to me for aid. I have one aim, one object, one thought just now, the ball—the ball. Who will be at the ball ? Who will dance with me at the ball ? Who will—ha ! ha !—be belle of the ball ? ” and laughing merrily, she ran out of the room at the same moment as her father entered it.

Sir Thomas Seaton was a stern, reserved man of sixty or thereabouts, who without the necessity for ever raising his voice, or visibly bringing the weight of his authority to bear, managed to make himself both feared and respected, and, as a natural consequence, obeyed by every member of his family and household, one alone excepted,—and it was this exception, we may at once inform our

readers, which had bent his broad shoulders and drawn furrows across his brow,—it was the harassing weight of a secret grief and anxiety, which neither wife nor daughters shared, that was fast making an old man of one who ought to have been in the full enjoyment of life and vigour. The necessity for ever keeping his hand on the lock of that cupboard door in which the skeleton was concealed, the constant dread lest some day —any day—should see it flung open to the eyes of all, was at the root of that absorbed and melancholy air which so often chilled mirth and silenced cheerful conversation in his presence, and which—as in the present instance—had not infrequently the effect of driving every one from the room within a few minutes after he had himself entered it.

The door had barely closed after the last to go, ere Sir Thomas rang the bell, which was answered by the butler.

His master beckoned him to approach

nearer, and each looked round the room, which was dim in the light of the few lamps that had been thought sufficient for that hour, before a word was said. Evidently they were not desirous of the presence of a third person.

Then Sir Thomas spoke. "I can depend on you, Marks?"

"Yes, Sir Thomas; certainly."

"You know the alternative? I have let you off once; but if it ever happens again, you—go. Don't mistake; I shall accept no excuse; you know your duty, and if you fail in it, you leave Castle Seaton to-morrow."

Marks bent his head respectfully. He had no intentions of leaving Castle Seaton to-morrow, and accordingly his respect, deference, and obedience were secured—he was, in plain terms, shaking in his shoes.

"Miss Madeline is at home to night," continued Sir Thomas in the same subdued undertone; "but I do not imagine that need

cause any difficulty. She is now aware——” he stopped abruptly, for the door opened.

“ Yes, half-past eight will do very well for the carriage to be round. It should not be later,” continued the speaker in accents of quite another kind, and the interview was concluded without Lady Seaton’s being in the least aware that Marks had entered on any other errand than that of an inquiry from the coachman as to the hour of starting.

Such interviews and such terminations were a daily occurrence.

Meantime, in the sisters’ upper chamber, the delightful task of dressing for the ball had begun, and was proceeding joyously.

“ Ah, Madeline, ’tis you at last ! I thought you were never coming ; where have you been ? ” cried the younger Miss Seaton, flying to open the door in answer to a tap. “ Not with Tom yet, surely ? You look serious enough, you poor, ill-used piece of goods. Well, if ever anybody felt

like one of the wicked sisters towards their lovely and maltreated Cinderella it is I, Flora Seaton, this night. And oh, my dear, supposing—only supposing—you were to turn into the veritable princess and appear after all! About what time would you appear? And have you thought about ordering your pumpkin and six,—because, if not, you may find some difficulty in providing it among these Galloway wilds? Joking apart, Tom is a brute not to let you go, you poor dear; and you are the best of angels to give in to him. Now don't turn away; I say it just the same behind your back as before your face, as Blanche will testify. I am ready now, dear; I have arranged everything; as high as ever you can to-night, Maddy; and firm—whatever you do, make it firm. Think if it should come down! Imagine my feelings if the whole erection were to fall over on Mr Cumberland's shoulder—what? What did you say?"

Madeline had not spoken.

“Oh, Blanche, you are not ringing for Martin yet?” proceeded the volatile young lady. “Oh, pray don’t. It is so tiresome having a maid in the room before you actually are forced to have her. I know it is early—far, far too early for me, I should be ready to go this minute, this second—but half-past eight is, alas! still a long way off, and as nothing we can do will really bring it nearer, all that remains is to make the most of the interval. Let us spin out, and spin out, and spin out; let us prolong, and prolong, and prolong. Let us—oh dear, and here is this poor Cinderella hearing it all and seeing it all, and cheated out of it all! I declare it is too bad, a great deal too bad. After all, it is not too late, either. Come, Madam Cousin, you won’t let me see your face, but I can guess pretty well what I should see if you did. Now, look here,” wheeling round in her chair, and lifting a

forefinger impressively, “you follow my advice ; make me your friend ; confide in me ; throw Tom over ; be off to your room ; run —fly—make ready——”

“And bring forth your ball-gown,” observed Blanche, sardonically. “Flora is invariably practical, is she not, Madeline ? At this hour she begins to repent.”

“No, my dear, ‘repent’ is not the word. I cannot seriously say that I repent of anything to-night, but I don’t like to see Maddy’s face—have you a headache or anything, dear ?” she suddenly broke off. “Well, never mind ; I hate to talk about aches and pains myself, ’tis so old-maidish. If there is one thing more stupid than another it is when people begin to take an interest in their ‘health.’ Aunt Theodora always attacks mamma to know what sort of ‘nights’ she has, and if her ‘poor dear girls’ are tolerably free from ‘nerves’ ; also if papa has a ‘comfortable digestion,’ and Tom ‘any

sort of appetite.' Papa, who has the stomach of an ostrich, and Tom, who has the appetite of a cannibal! What would the good aunt think if she saw me dancing to-night? Luckily mamma has no such cares; she only minds about my partners, not at all about my limbs and joints; and if she sees me waltzing with Mr Cumberland—dear me, how you did hurt me, Madeline! I suppose I moved my head."

"Be a little more careful, I advise you, Flora, if you would not have your name coupled with Mr Cumberland's down-stairs," observed Blanche, for the maid had retired for the moment; "servants are quick to catch up anything of that kind, and whatever Martin hears in this room is sure to go straight to the servants' hall directly she leaves us."

"A plague on her, and a plague on you for having her, then!" muttered the chatter-

box. “How can one be for ever remembering that there is a tell-tale-tit behind your chair, especially on a night like this? Blessings on you, my Madeline, that side is perfect; now, if you can only match it with the other—well, I won’t speak. You are the princess of hairdressers, the sweetest of cousins, and the kindest, and dearest, and dowdiest of Cinderellas;” laughing out of the fulness of her satisfaction, “there now, you have caught the idea exactly——”

A tap at the door. “Miss Madeline is wanted.”

“Oh, you unlucky slave! hustled from one to the other, all of us needing you, all of us hanging on you, and Tom commanding you—there, she’s gone. Blanche, how has she left me? Blanche, if I am not at my best to-night, I shall throw myself into the sea. Despair will give me courage, mortification will——”

“If you can be silent for a single moment,  
Flora——”

“I can—I will.”

“You never looked better.”

“Be joyful; that is good news. In return, Blanche, I will tell you also something agreeable; for you too, my Blanche, have your anxiety and your despair, despite your sturdy attempts to overcome them. Oh yes, oh yes; oh, we all know about it. You are not in the least jealous—not in the very, very slightest; such an idea would never have entered your head. You do not even admire Madeline—oh dear, no; ha! ha! ha! Well, but, admire or not, you may as well hear what I have got to say. When you two stood together over there, if any one had asked which was the beautiful Miss Seaton, your very heart would have been warmed by the answer I could have sworn you would have heard. Yet again, lest that heart should

be uplifted over-much, I must in honour confess that Madeline—dear, sweet, lovely Madeline—to-night with her pale face and her great blue ponds of wet eyes, would not have outshone the ugliest little imp in Christendom!"

## II.

## UNSHAKEN.

“A noble cause doth ease much a grievous case.”

—SIR P. SIDNEY.

TOM had sent for his cousin ; but although she had obeyed the summons so far as to leave the room she was in and close the door behind her, Madeline did not descend the staircase, but sending a message that she would appear as soon as the rest of the party had left for the ball, she ran quickly along to her own little chamber, and bolting the door, gave way at length to feelings that had been struggled with and but ill repressed throughout the day.

It was not a fancy of Flora’s that she looked pale. It was not for nothing that

those great blue eyes had filled and refilled, until even the heavy fringe of lashes which overhung their depths could scarce conceal what had been going on when out of sight and alone. Madeline could be as blithe as any one, as joyous as any one when there was no sharp agony of disappointment to be borne, no wild, all but impossible hopes to be quenched, no passionate entreaties to be choked down and trampled under foot—but to-night? And she had only known a few hours before! And up to that time there had been secret smiles and happy visions; there had been dreams of what this hour and that would bring; there had been shy delights at the modest loveliness which the fair scene would enhance, hopes, wonders, doubts, cares, ecstasies all centring round the same point and having the same object and subject—there had been an eye, a voice, a touch; a step that would find her out wherever she might be hidden; an arm that

would guide through the maze and crowd to quieter and more secluded nooks ; a whisper—but we are telling what this poor little sorrowful maid would scarcely even tell herself. It is not fair ; we will not, we dare not pry into the curtained recesses of pure hearts like hers.

She was so young and tender, this fragile plant. She knew not how to turn aside the wandering shaft, nor how to protect her bare little sensitive bosom. Her time had come ; oh, so early. And all at once the deepest notes of her nature had been struck, and all at a blow had every bulwark—such poor little twopenny-halfpenny bulwarks as she possessed—given way. She had been taught to love, and the lesson had been learnt in an hour.

To explain, however, a little more fully, we must give a brief sketch of the position of Madeline Seaton, the orphan niece of Sir Thomas, who at the age of seventeen, exactly

one year before our story opens, had been thrown upon the world by the death of her last parent, and had been then glad to make the most of the very respectable welcome accorded her by her nearest and almost her only relations.

Nor had she then or thereafter any cause to repent, so far as her uncle and aunt and their daughters were concerned. Sir Thomas was, if anything, a shade less formal and morose in his niece's company than in that of his own more immediate family; Lady Seaton, an amiable, easy-going, and excessively indolent woman, needed only the conviction that her crippled son, on whom she blindly doted, was also an object of affection to his cousin, to make Madeline secure of her favour; while the two young ladies were as good friends as could reasonably be expected, with a rival whom each knew—although only Flora openly avowed the fact—needed only to be seen to eclipse them both. But for one

circumstance of her lot, any one might have considered that of the orphan an enviable one.

That circumstance unhappily embittered all.

Had Tom Seaton's adoring mother obtained but one glimpse into the heart of her whom she was wont to term “that dear girl,” it is hardly too much to predict that she would have abolished the epithet. Whether she would have gone still further and abolished the dear girl herself *in propria personā*, history saith not, but it is at least as likely as not that she would. For Tom—her poor Tom, her dear sufferer, her helpless invalid, her crippled darling—was not altogether all that such a fond and tender picture places before the imagination; and no one knew this better, or felt it more keenly, than did the companion whom circumstances forced upon him oftener than any other.

The boy, for he was not much more, was,

it is true, an object for compassion to any one. Not only was he deformed and stunted in shape, not only was his attenuated frame too small by far for his large and rugged head, but the shrunken limbs were so powerless that they could not even support their owner in the feeblest movement, and day after day had to be dragged through by the unfortunate young heir extended on a couch from which no efforts of his own could raise him.

But beyond the pity inseparable from beholding such affliction, it was not given to the ill-fated youth to inspire any warmer emotion except in one bosom,—it was more than any one but his mother could do to speak of Tom with tenderness. He cared for no one; no one cared for him. As is not seldom the case, a deep-seated festering bitterness against his kind had possession of his inmost soul; malicious thoughts and purposes fed his solitary hours; and to

defeat, trick, and torment those with whom he lived, be they relations or dependants, was one of the principal aims of his life.

What the other was will presently be seen.

“ You are come at last,” was the greeting accorded his cousin, when at length, with a heavy heart, she descended to Tom’s room—a room of ample dimensions, warmly and comfortably furnished, in one of the best parts of the Castle.

“ Come at last, Miss Madeline. You waited as long as ever you could to enjoy all the fun, and fancy that you too were going to jig and fiddle at this fine ball—and don’t you wish you were? So famous a chance has not come in your way yet, and Blanche and Flora will talk of nothing else for many a day to come. Well, you had your choice. If you had behaved yourself you might have gone. Eh? You would have liked that, wouldn’t you? Come in further, what are

you still standing there for in the middle of the room?"

"Did—did you not send for me, Tom?"

"Send for you? To be sure I did. Sent for you an hour ago; but you were saucy—just like you—and chose to go and cry upstairs first. Oh, it's all very fine to turn away your head—let that lamp alone—it's all very fine to suppose I know nothing, because I have to lie hear like a dead dog. You have been whimpering, I tell you. Yes, you have been whimpering till your face is in a nice state; it doesn't improve its looks, you may believe. So you cried because you couldn't go to the ball? I am glad you did; I wanted you to cry: I am going to give you something else to cry for by-and-by. I'll teach you to disobey me. Come here."

She advanced a step.

"Come here, I tell you," repeated he, with a frown; "call that coming! I am not going to touch you, you milk-faced thing. You

know well enough I could not hurt you if I would. If I could hurt you, or any one, should I be lying here? I only want to look at you. Yes, and you look very much as I expected you would. You have been punished, miss; and it has done you good; you won't need punishing again in a hurry. You will do what you are told next time."

All at once it might have been perceived that she who had hitherto stood a picture of helpless endurance under a storm so pitiless, began to tremble.

"You will—do what you—are told—next time," reiterated Tom, with his eye upon her, "and next time is going to be—this time. Now take care, Miss Madeline Seaton, take care; I see you are going to speak, so I just give you a caution beforehand. Take care what you say, for *I* shan't forget it, if it don't please me; and what *I* don't forget, you may believe *you* won't. You had the best of it, or you thought you had,

this morning ; but wait a bit, I haven't done with you yet—though I don't think you enjoyed staying at home to-night either. Ha ! ha ! ha ! it was rather rich getting both the parent birds to join in it, and both so innocently. There was some fun in that. It made you cry a little, didn't it ? Not half enough, though. Now look here, Maddy"—all at once another note was struck in the speaker's voice, and instead of the rowdy tones of the bully, an anxious supplicating whine, the whine of a mendicant, took its place. "Look here," said Tom, "enough of this. I wasn't in earnest—not above the half at least : I only wanted to bother you. You are such a confounded little fool that you go and get ideas into your head for which there is not the slightest occasion, and which no one with any sense would ever dream of. Because a fellow asks for a glass of brandy, a thing that any fellow might ask for, you go and turn up the

whites of your eyes. Why, I ought not to need to ask, it ought to be offered me, and would, if my people were like anybody else's—but you know what an old-fashioned set they are. It's all a matter of prejudice. My father would be the last person in the world to wish to keep anything from me, only he is frightened, he's nervous, he thinks it's not *the thing*; and my mother has an idea that spoon-meat is all I am or ever will be fit for—a basin of gruel, or boiled bread-and-milk, or some such slop; so, as I am a peaceable sort of a chap, and don't wish to have rows, instead of kicking up a dust and saying 'I must' and 'I will,' I come quietly to you."

She made a movement.

"Of course I know what you are thinking," proceeded Tom, in the same bland and moderate tone; "you are thinking 'Why to you?' Now just see how dutiful and conscientious I am, you who talk so much about your

conscience : the reason is this, because I don't think it would be right, you know, not quite fair and above-board and all that sort of thing, to ask either of my sisters to do what their father disapproves. From this obligation you, Madeline, are free ; no one could blame you, and—I say, I'm getting tired, and the thing is as clear as daylight ; you saw it in quite the right light the first time—it is only a maggot you have taken into your head since ; so now go for the brandy like a good creature. Marks will give it you like a shot, as he did before, and we'll have a good time all round."

Madeline looked at him steadily. "Was that what you sent for me to do ?"

"Why, of course," said Tom, with a laugh ; "it was not entirely for the pleasure of your sweet society, my dear girl, though of course that ought to count for something. Come, look sharp ; I tell you it will be all right with Marks. Oh, you need not shake your head ;

I tell you it will. Marks has one face for one master, and one for another. I shall be master some day, and no one appreciates that fact more than does old Marks; but Lor' bless you, he means to keep a good place, so he soft-sawders the governor too. You go for the brandy. And I say, just ask it for yourself, you understand. You are a little bit ill—faint—arent' you? Oh yes, you are; that was why you didn't go to the ball—and you think that a glass of spirits would do you good; and you will just take the bottle to your room in case you require it in the night—ladies do occasionally. Marks will be as sweet as possible; he will make no difficulty. He could not bring it me himself for fear of getting into a scrape; but what harm could there be in only giving a little cordial to Miss Madeline? Neither there is; no sort of harm. Only that it is I, not you, who am the person in need. I do need it too, with a vengeance. I need it, and," he struck

with his hand the table at his side—"and, by G——, I'll have it!"

"Not to-night, Tom."

So soft was the whispered response that in his excitement it failed to convey its meaning to Madeline's auditor, and seeing her lips part, and that she made a slight motion as though about to go, he proceeded eagerly, "Hurry up, then—there's a good girl—and catch the old fellow before he settles down to his own bottle for the night. A fine gentleman he to affect such a grim austerity, ain't he? You and I know, eh, Maddy? Oh, I have taught you a lot that none of those other stupids ever dream of; I took a fancy to you from the first; I should have done it to any one, if it had been only to make my mother jealous, but—well, never mind, get off now, we can talk presently. What! ain't you gone yet? You are turning lazy, madam, or——" slowly rising on his elbow, "you—are you turning sulky, eh? Which is it?"

She was silent. He saw her clasp her hands.

“Well?” exclaimed he, with such a sudden resumption of his former manner, that the poor girl started and trembled. “Well? What’s the meaning of this?”

“I cannot go. I cannot bring you what you wish. You know—oh, you know why,” murmured Madeline, hanging her head for very shame of the thing she would hint at. “Think of what you are doing, Tom. Oh, do think of it. You are so young, and all your life is before you——”

“*My* life!”

“But it is so dreadful,” pleaded Madeline, with the burning blush still on her brow. “It is so—forgive me for speaking, Tom,—but it is so wicked, so degrading.”

“Ah—h,” said Tom, with a long breath. “So you take in the whole case, I see.”

He was silent for a few minutes, then lifted his head as though with a new reso-

lution. “I have been wasting my breath. I have been trying to hoodwink you, and you are too much for me. I might have spared my pains. Yes; I was drunk—mad drunk—the other night when Sir Thomas and you came in. And I suppose I shocked you”—slowly and scornfully—“and you have hardly yet got over it. You did not think it gentlemanlike, eh, Madeline? I thought I had seen something different about you since then.”

He stopped to think.

“I wonder,” he continued after a while—“I wonder if anything will ever be to you the same as a drink of brandy would be to me this night!”

She shuddered.

“Madeline, have you any pity?”

Her hands fell by her side.

“Think of what you might do for me. Think of my misery—think of a poor wretch brought to such a state as this,” continued

Tom, with increasing earnestness, “I—I haven’t many pleasures. Pleasures?—to drink and forget my misery is the only pleasure I know. Yes, Madeline, I’ll own the truth to you, I would sell body and soul for brandy to-night. All this day I have been thinking of it, and you are my only hope. Since they sent William away” (no one else had ever known why the last footman had been dismissed, and why Marks had had to perform his functions single-handed since); “since they sent William away,” proceeded Tom, with his fiery hungry eyes fixed on his auditor, “you have been my only hope. I can’t live without drink. I lie here day after day, thinking and thinking how to get it. Don’t turn away, Madeline—you can never know, never, never know, what that agony is. For the last fortnight I have been in hell; and then the idea came to me—you had the chance this morning, and you put it from you, and that maddened

me. I swore to myself that you should stay at home to-night, and that you should obey me yet. When you first came in I tried to terrify you, for I thought it was my best way; but you are a brave plucky girl, and would not be frightened. Now you are going to be a ministering angel, and get me what I want out of purest compassion. See now, how humbly I plead for it! Guess, if you can, what tortures I endure before I would humiliate myself like this. Just this once. I know very well it's wicked and all that, and I shall stop it; why, of course I mean to stop it, when I get stronger—but I can't to-night. No, I can't begin to-night. Just this once—this once—dearest Madeline——”

She turned away; she could not look at him.

“ You need not remain after you have brought it,” pursued Tom. “ I know,” bitterly, “ I know the sort of pleasure it gives

you to be in this room. I will release you this evening, and to-morrow every one shall hear how good and kind you have been—and so you will have been, in the way I like best——”

“Hush!”

He stopped instantly; there was that about the tone and manner of the speaker which made him stop. Madeline had stepped forward and stood by the window in the full light of a bright November moon, for the curtains had not been drawn—and the expression in her eye and the resolution on her brow was at once manifest.

“Tom, I cannot; I dare not. Say what you will, do what you will, never, never again will I yield as I did once. I did not know then,—now, I do. I have heard you with your own lips confess it, and can you now suppose——”

“Suppose!” broke out Tom, with an oath. “You are going, are you? Going? And

you think to defy me like this, and then escape. Stop, I tell you—stop; what! she won't? Madeline——”

No answer. She was at the door.

“Madeline,” his voice was hoarse, but not loud. “Madeline, beware. If you tempt me—I advise you not—Madeline, Madeline, fool as you are, I advise you not.”

## III.

## ALL THAT HAD BEEN GOING ON BEFORE.

*“But tho’ th’ expected hour is fondly sought,  
At every sound her little heart will beat,—  
And she will blush e’en at the very thought  
Of meeting him whom she delights to meet.”*

—Knox.

As had been predicted, nothing was heard of but the ball for the next few days. Madeline had to listen to this and to that, and to be interested in all; to feel how unlucky it was that Blanche’s best partner should have been obliged to leave early, and to rejoice that Flora had never once needed to sit out; to be pleased that Sir Thomas had been prevailed on to remain so late, and be concerned that it had been no later; to be convinced that many more

besides her aunt had felt the cold draughts, and wonder why the hot soup should not have been brought straight to the hall from the kitchen, instead of being detained on the way till it was little more than lukewarm.

To all of these demands on her attention the absentee was able to respond with the readiness born of a cheerful unselfish disposition; and it was only now and again—and that when really there was nothing in particular to draw forth interest or notice—that she might have been observed to falter, change colour, or grow suddenly silent. For instance, “I never did enjoy a ball more,” cried Flora, for the twentieth time; “the music, the floor, the dancing all so good; and every one was looking so bright and well, so happy and jolly, and—and——”

“And Mr Cumberland so attentive,” put in Blanche, archly. “That is what Flora means, is it not, Madeline ? ”

“Perhaps, and perhaps not,” said Flora

for herself, for it was at that moment Madeline chanced to be engrossed in something else. “Don’t you put much faith in anything that Blanche says, Maddy ; she had her friends, I had mine. As for Mr Cumberland, he is nothing to me—nothing *really* to me more than other people. He dances well—no one can say he does not dance well——”

“He was the best dancer in the room,” observed her sister.

“Was he ? I daresay he was. I thought so myself, I confess ; but then, that might have been because his step went so exactly with mine that I could not help enjoying it more than—than—I really had to keep a few for him, you know, Blanche. I am afraid there were one or two who gave me black looks ; and one enemy, if not more, I have certainly made,—but those men are so absurd. Talk of women’s jealousy,—no woman in the world would ever be as jeal-

ous as a man if you do but look at another man."

"Mr Cumberland show any symptoms?"

"I don't know that he had the occasion. Now don't call me over the coals; I know you are going to remark on our dancing so often together. What if we did dance rather often together? If he liked dancing with *me*, and I liked dancing with *he*"—and so on, and so on.

Or it would be, "Mr Cumberland inquired after you, Maddy. I opened my mouth in your praises, you may be sure; I told him what a dear kind little thing you were, and that you stayed behind last night on Tom's account—and mamma did the same. I heard her dilating on the subject with her accustomed warmth. Oh, he heard nothing but good of you from the family, I can tell you."

Or, "Mr Cumberland is staying on indefinitely at the Moor Farm, he says. He

has no fixed plans yet. What do you suppose a man means by having ‘no fixed plans’? Surely it is rather an odd thing to do, to stay on and on at a rough old farmhouse, after the shooting is over, and when the weather is so miserable? He must like Galloway for some other reason than shooting; should you not say so, Madeline?”

For remarks of this kind Madeline had no answer.

Mr Cumberland, a stranger, a sportsman, and a bachelor, had come down to the neighbourhood the previous August, having rented some outlying shootings from Sir Thomas, and the young man had been looked upon with favourable eyes by the family generally, and had considerably advanced in intimacy at the time our story opens; but which of the fair ones at the Castle was the object of his assiduities, or whether he had an object at all, remained to be seen.

A man of the world, accustomed to society of every kind, agreeably bold and acceptably easy, it was natural that he should pay to all, those attentions which, when distributed amongst many are as harmless as the distant lightning that spreads itself across the heavens, but which, if confined to *one*, would strike as fatally as that lightning when it forks and darts straight to its point. That Lady Seaton's handsome, broad-backed, somnolent pug, Bubble, should be a source of attention and interest to Cumberland seemed as inevitable as that he should arrange Blanche's drawing materials, or nail up Flora's favourite creeper on the wall. That he should be appealed to by each a dozen times a visit, that he should be conscious of a welcome from all directly his figure appeared in the doorway, kept up the proper balance of things. He knew how to please all, how to stand well with all; it gave him no trouble, and

cost him no effort. Whether there remained behind or lurked beneath so genial and easy a state of things, a deeper and a tenderer sentiment, was, as we have said above, an open question.

As regarded Cumberland himself, he may perhaps be best described as a young man, who, in many respects, was very like other young men as well born, well educated, and well backed up in all relations with the world. He was neither more nor less satisfied with the circumstances of his lot than he ought to have been. He was not arrogant or exacting; while at the same time it must be owned that, without a trace of that vulgar self-assertion which at once defeats its own end, he was—perhaps he could hardly have helped being—so secure of his position and dignity, that they had never cost him a moment's concern. In person he was tall and broad, with movements so graceful that they could have been the re-

sult of nothing but a form perfect in all respects ; but his face was plain, and it was frequently remarked by the pretty girls with whom he came in contact, as a sort of safeguard to the hearts which in spite of themselves had an awkward trick of palpitating when Cumberland came near, that really there was not a good feature in it, and that whatever people said, it was absurd to call Mr Cumberland anything but ugly. Yet he found a way made for him everywhere—he got on well with everybody—room was contrived for him in the fullest house—a niche discovered at the most crowded table ; he was, in short, a man admired, courted, and run after, yet who had, as by a miracle, escaped being spoilt.

If such was Cumberland, then, in society—if he could hold his own among others as young, rich, and prosperous—what could be expected when he was left alone, stranded, as it were, among the Calloway moors, after

nearly every other person of any sort of note had departed, and when those who remained behind could only serve as foils ? Met at the first under circumstances so favourable, seen continually to advantage, whether as contrasted with the less polished young squires around, or encountered alone, amid deep dells and romantic shores, what could fail to be the result ? He must be, for the time at least, *the* person of the place. He must be talked about, thought about perpetually ; Blanche and Flora Seaton must divide him ; he must be a joint possession ; Madeline must report fully on every occasion of her meeting her cousin's friend ; Tom must be made to wish for Cumberland's society, and to beg for it as a favour to an invalid ; Sir Thomas must invite him to dinner as a charity ; and Bubble must be decorated with an Oxford blue ribbon when he came.

In justice to the young ladies, however, we must allow that although vanity had been

flattered and interest aroused, the indiscriminating gallantry of Cumberland had not been met with anything to feed the self-love of even a far greater coxcomb than he. Both sisters had, perhaps, shown a little more lively desire to be talked to and amused by him than they were themselves aware ; but that they did so show it, in itself spoke volumes. Had things gone deeper, they had been more circumspect ; and Cumberland did them the justice to know this.

The naughty boy knew something else, moreover, and something that concerned him infinitely more ; but of this we shall hear presently.

On the morning after the dance Flora was in the ascendant. It was “Mr Cumberland said this,” and “Mr Cumberland thought that,” at every turn with her ; and Mr Cumberland’s absence, for he had gone on a short visit to a shooting friend, was rendered endurable by being able to talk about

him and quote him uninterruptedly for three whole days. He was to be gone till Monday, she informed the less enlightened ; on Thursday he had departed, and departed for three days—three lawful days—three shooting days being no doubt what was meant. Sunday would be thrown in ; it was next to certain that he would not return for the Sunday, to spend the day in solitary confinement at his barren quarters on the moor ; and nobody—with something of resentment towards the father who had been remiss—nobody had asked him to the Castle. It was a bachelor party to which he had gone, the narrator proceeded ; there were to be no ladies ; Mr Cumberland had been most particular in informing her that there were to be no ladies, and doubtless the gay bachelors would be very cosy without them. Mr Cumberland had not said so, however. On the contrary, he had seemed to consider the visit a bore, and owned to having accepted

it hastily. Indeed she was of opinion that if he could afterwards have been off it with decency, he would. That he had gone, nevertheless, was a certainty; and almost equally convinced was his fair spokeswoman that as he had gone, so he would remain.

It was accordingly with something very nearly amounting to a shock that a certain pair of soft blue eyes met a very searching pair of dark ones—met them full, and felt them, as it were, flash reproach, inquiry, and remonstrance into hers, as Madeline Seaton entered the little old parish church of Kildaverock that dull and sombre Sunday morning which followed the events above recorded.

The eyes were speaking loudly, in distinct and imperative terms. They said, “It was for you, and for you alone, that I came here to-day; but you—do you care whether I am here or not?”

She had not supposed Cumberland would

be there, Flora being so confident he would not, and Flora having (a still more sure sign) stayed away herself. Cumberland was a churchgoer at Kildaverock, whatever he might be at other places ; and had his partner at the ball not been very sincere indeed in her convictions, she would undoubtedly not have remained at home. As it was, she had a headache, and as Sir Thomas was also ailing, only Lady Seaton with her eldest daughter and niece entered the old-fashioned whitewashed little building a few minutes before the service began.

They had not seated themselves ere Madeline received the shock we speak of.

Cumberland was in his usual place, a few yards distant from the Seatons' pew, and to reach theirs they must pass him. Even as she entered the doorway, the thing was done. The one had looked the other full in the face, and each was conscious that a revelation had been made.

Now what must Madeline do? Her breath comes and goes, her heart beats in her throat, her hands twitch and tremble. She knows, she knows how it will be by-and-by. Can she listen as she ought? Can she take part as she ought in that holy service? Alas! which of us would? She had, as we have said, given her all, and given it ere she knew. Who was to tell her what such things meant? How was she to guess what all those strange new feelings, those tinglings in the veins, those vibrations, throbs, burnings of the cheek, and tremblings of the lip were leading to?

And following on the meeting, the chance aside, or the eagerly embraced opportunity which had called forth such emotions, had there not been hours of sweet stolen reverie, of exquisite recollections, a counting over and over of her treasures, and a hidden clasping of them deeper and deeper to her heart?

There might have been but a word—a look. It had passed and vanished away, and yet it was ever with her. Over and over again in the long hours of the night would pass in review the little gallery of her possessions. Could he have meant this? Could he have thought that? Did he know, did he guess, did he care what her thoughts were?

And now how shy, how frightened, how dumb had Madeline become in Cumberland's presence!

At the first she had laughed and jested and prattled as gaily as a humming-bird. The two had had more than one merry meeting—accidentally, of course; for how was she to suspect that the communicative Flora or the exact Blanche had been severally drawn into letting fall intimations of their cousin's haunts and habits, which had been acted upon on the instant? but Madeline had then been innocent as the day, and had run in all

glowing with the basket of sea-shells which Cumberland had helped to gather, or the moss from the woods which he had untwined. He had been wary, and had tamed his nestling gently to his hand. She had been his in heart and thought, almost his in words, ere she herself had dreamed as much.

And then at last he had startled her, or she had startled herself.

All at once solitary rambles, woodland expeditions, lingerings behind in the great fire-lit drawing-room, or chance encounters in the dusky porch as the sun was setting—all of these had ceased simultaneously.

He had sought her, here, there, and everywhere in vain. He had haunted her favourite walks, lain in wait among the high hedges of the shrubbery, invented pretexts for being up-stairs, down-stairs, for being early or late, out of doors or indoors, according as she was likely to be the same—and it had been of no use.

She had not dared to trust herself, she had had a glimpse into the unseen.

And accordingly. “Confound it all, can I have been mistaken?” debated the bewildered lover betwixt astonishment and consternation. “I thought I was all right, and there really seemed no hitch; shy little thing as she is, she came to me quite willingly, and opened out all her little heart, and—and—I’m not a fool, and I *know* she loves me. She loves me for myself, too. She has never seen nor heard of what I can do for her—she would not care if she did. I have won her for myself and by myself. And now comes the rub. They have been speaking to her, I suppose, unless there is something worse. She flies from me like the plague, if I am but left alone with her for two seconds after the others have gone. She clings to Blanche and Flora, as if they were the sole supports of her life; and as for catching her out of doors, I might as well try to catch a stormy

petrel on the waves. Well, thank goodness, she can't escape me at the ball," he had concluded, and had blessed the ball—Flora's ball—in his heart.

It had never occurred to him that Madeline would stay away; she had originally been going, he knew; he had seen the smile flit across her face on her aunt's remarking on its being her niece's first appearance, her first real appearance in the world—and he had himself conveyed to her, as he well knew how, that he was with her in feeling on the matter. It was to have been to them both an evening of evenings.

And then she had not been there, and he had been told that it was the doing of that wretched Seaton boy, a miserable cub, whose very existence was to be deplored! What had Madeline to do with him?

The vexation and disappointment had been acute. When he thought of the fair flower-like face and dimpled rounded form set off

by girlish finery—when he called to memory the moments he had meant to have had when once more he should have compelled her to give her ear and her eye exclusively to himself—when he saw himself cheated out of those intervals which he would have used so well, and those opportunities each one of which would have given rise to another—and when he saw—or thought he saw—if all went well, one moment supreme, one chance for ever to be remembered, all swept away at one fell swoop—it was as much as the well-bred young man could do to force his angry tongue to do its common part, and not give utterance to what might have to be repented of.

As the evening wore on, however, things had faintly brightened. Flora, the chatterer, had let slip one thing and another which had involuntarily contributed to disperse the most serious part of his woe; and although he had missed a treat, although perhaps he

had lost what in one sense he could never regain, he had not absolutely lost everything, when he had learned that Madeline was to the full as deeply chagrined as himself.

It appeared that she had not of set purpose avoided the festivity, neither had she offered herself a voluntary sacrifice. In the one case he would have been dumfounded, in the other furious.

But Flora had maintained stoutly that Madeline had had no choice; that papa had asked her, and mamma had implored her to stay,—he was greatly comforted, he could not but be kind to such a consoler. Poor Flora!—and now we, the bystanders, know all about it, and can also pretty well imagine what brought Mr Frank Cumberland to Kildaverock Church on the Sunday morning, when, by all the rules of bachelorhood and sportsmancraft, he ought to have been a dozen miles away; nay, more, what sent up

into his eyes such an eagerness and significance on the approach of little yellow-haired Madeline that she did not hear one word of all Mr M'Phinnock's excellent discourse, nor even attempt to join in the psalm. She was waiting for what was to follow.

## IV.

“ YOU LOOK DISTRESSED, MY DEAR.”

“I trow that countenance cannot lye  
Whose thoughts are legible in the eye.”

—SPENSER.

LADY SEATON had not used either carriage or waggonette for church. Sir Thomas's Irish car—a rattle-trap found convenient for the moors, and good enough to be taken out on Sundays when the weather was bad and the hilly road soft and heavy—was in waiting to convey the party home at the close of the service; and the elder lady, escorted by Cumberland, who in vain had attempted to slip behind to where the girls were following, was presently assisted by him to ascend.

"Blanche sits with me," observed her ladyship, looking round; "the lightest weight has to sit with Wilson, our coachman, as he is so heavy, and Sir Thomas is particular about the springs. Blanche, my love—oh, she's here. Where is Madeline?"

Madeline was speaking to a young shepherd in tartan trews, with a plaid wound round his shoulders, from which he had drawn forth a small parcel.

"Some wood for Tom, I suppose," remarked Blanche, stepping lightly up beside her mother. "I heard him tell Maddy to be sure to bring it carefully."

"For his carving, dear boy," explained the fond parent to Cumberland; "it is such a resource to him. Don't hurry Miss Madeline, Wilson; there may be some directions with it. Just go to the horse's head, he seems rather fretty to-day; and Mr Cumberland will kindly assist Miss Madeline, I am sure." Cumberland, busily tucking in the

rug round Blanche's feet, felt very sure indeed he would. "Dear Madeline is so good, so devoted," pursued her aunt; "and here she comes, and Donald with her. What a nice, open, pleasant face that young man has! And he has carried that great big heavy block of wood all the way from the pierhead! I must give him some trifle; but I cannot find my pocket—ah well, I shall not forget. Madeline, my dear, be quick now; oh, thank you, Mr Cumberland," for Cumberland was already at the other side.

With the polite attention of an indifferent assistant he was aiding and arranging; but the spectators, who only saw and did not hear, would have opened their eyes and ears both had they been in little Madeline's place. Cumberland had but a minute, but he was not a man to lose even the fraction of a minute; ere he had seated her and buttoned the apron he had given another of those

shocks with which his battery was overcharged, and had beheld the damage it inflicted. This time it was in words, very few words, very trifling apparently, very terrible in reality—those sort of words which at the moment do little more than confuse and startle, but whose power increases on reflection until they come to be looked upon in the retrospect as written in letters of fire.

Cumberland, as we say, saw what he had done, and was satisfied.

“Do, Mr Cumberland, drive home with us and join our early dinner.” It had just occurred to Lady Seaton to do the civil thing at the same instant that she was experiencing regret at having brought no groom, and having only heavy old Wilson to trust to in case her young gig-horse turned restive. Even as she spoke the chestnut was fidgeting and moving from side to side uneasily, and she did not above half like the idea of Wilson’s driving from the side: if only Wilson

could be in the little top seat which was always taken in the car, and could be adjusted at a moment's notice—" You have the seat with you, have you not, Wilson ? "

" It's doun i' the place atween ye, my leddy. I can settle it i' a meenut," responded the coachman, willingly. " Hey, Donald ! haud the horse," and he ran to the back and extracted the seat from the receptacle between the sides, almost before Cumberland had time to accept or decline ; and, still mute and trembling, to Madeline's horror—or to her delight—at any rate to her confusion and agitation, the next minute saw all arranged, saw Wilson on the seat in front, Cumberland up beside herself, the remainder of the apron shared by him, his elbow resting on the cushioned ledge behind, his face turned towards her, and on that face a smile. Three miles of a *tête-à-tête* drive over the moor lay before them.

" Hey ! the parcel, the parcel !" bawled a

voice from behind ; and Donald, the shepherd, was soon running at full speed after the party, with the parcel in his hand, which had been laid down by the wayside when, at Wilson's request, he had gone to stand at the horse's head.

“ Hey ! the parcel, the parcel ! ”

The car was already well started, and at the unfortunate moment of just getting his head the young horse had to be checked and brought up, to the annoyance of the old coachman.

“ What for could ye no' hae thocht on that afore, man ? ” he demanded, indignation overcoming recollection of his mistress's presence. “ ‘ The parcel, the parcel ! ’ ‘ Deed, an' it would ha' been nae great matter for a lang loon like him to hae walkit ower wi' it. ‘ The parcel, the parcel ! ’ Aweel,” louder, “ be quick wi' your parcel, then. Hey, noo, quiet noo, my man ” (to the horse) ; “ noo-ny, noo-ny,” soothingly ; “ are ye a' richt ? ”

Looking back, and scarcely waiting for the reply, the rein was loosed, and away they went.

"Good heavens, he's bolted!" exclaimed Cumberland, under his breath.

Fate was cruel to him. He had been swindled a second time out of one of his chances.

Such, at the first blush, was the sole thought of the wrathful young man, but a very few seconds' reflection served to introduce a more serious one. It was all very well to grudge the prospective delights of a lover's hour, but there was something in thus being baffled by the whim of a runaway horse, which was not precisely a matter of secondary importance.

The car was dashing along at a fine rate.

Happily their way led across a long stretch of bleak, open moorland, with neither bank nor brae to right or to left, and the excellent road, cut through a heather morass, offered

the safest and wholesomest vent to the humours of a frightened steed that could possibly have been imagined. If he would only hold on as he was doing, and if nothing came in his way to terrify or startle anew, he would probably quiet down of himself, after another four or five minutes, and, soothed and pacified by the voice he knew, trot peaceably on for the remainder of the way. If, on the other hand, they were to come into collision with any other vehicle, or if even the parties of walkers who were now trudging on their homeward way from the kirk were in any way, by attempting a rescue or otherwise, to add to the scare, Cumberland scarcely liked to think of what might be the result. Involuntarily his arm stole round the little figure at his side.

“Are you frightened?” he whispered.

“N—no; not much.”

“You need not be; *I’ll take care of you. There is no real danger,*” said Cumberland,

stating his honest belief. "Still, perhaps, I had better hold you so, if you don't mind. Do you mind?"

"No."

"Grasp the rail with your other hand, and give me this one. Oh, that parcel; let it go. I should."

"Oh, I mustn't. Tom would be so dreadfully vexed. I can hold it quite well."

"With your other hand then. Give me this. So; now you are as safe as possible. Don't attempt to jump out, whatever you do. Promise. That's right. We shall be all right directly." With suchlike broken assurances and injunctions, delivered from time to time as they swung along, was Madeline consoled. Perhaps she did not need all the consolation she got. Perhaps with that strong arm round her, and that voice so deep and tender in her ear, she did not heed as she ought to have done the situation and the peril. She sat perfectly still, and got applaud-

ed and approved ; while poor Blanche, who had no encouragement, no support, and nothing else to think of, was secretly anathematised, both by Cumberland and Wilson, for being unable to suppress her terrors.

Even her mother, owing, perhaps, to the usual comfortable serenity of her disposition, behaved better than Blanche.

“ I really do not see why we should not get home safely,” she observed. “ The road is so very level, and——”

“ Gif we were but passed the lodge gate,” muttered the old coachman.

“ You are all right, aren’t you ? ” inquired Cumberland, looking round to gather from Wilson’s face whether or not his nerve was equal to the occasion. “ You are all right, Wilson ? ”

“ Right eneuch, sir ; ou ay, sir, he’ll no haud on lang at this rate,” was the cheery response. “ Nae fears, leddies, nae fears ; ” as a fresh shriek from the terrified Blanche

brought a frown to his brow, "canna ye haud the tongue o' ye?" muttered he between his teeth. "There's but ae place, Maister Cummerland!"

"Yes, I know—the lodge."

For the lodge on the moorland road was a full mile and a half from the Castle, and was not always so well attended to as it ought to have been. On a Sunday, when most of the inhabitants would have been at church, and not have yet returned, it was but too probable that the party might have to wait for the gate to be opened, or even have to open it for themselves—and such a delay might be fatal.

With anxious gaze, then, did all now bend forward as the low stone cottage came into view, and with sinking hearts did they perceive plainly against the sky the bars of the closed gate. Coming at the pace they were doing, there could scarcely be a hope that they would be seen in time for any one not

already on the look-out, to run and unbar it. Nevertheless, directly they were within ear-shot, all, with one accord, raised their voices, and not without effect; for almost immediately a buxom lass ran swiftly out, and darting across the road, began to undo the fastenings in nervous haste. Another moment and all would have been well, but that moment was not accorded; the terrified animal, already only half subdued, and thwarted thus afresh, swerved violently aside, slipped, and fell, while the car was turned over, and all its occupants thrown out.

Cumberland was on his feet in an instant.

“Any one hurt?” he cried; and, to do him justice, he did not linger by Madeline’s side as soon as ever he had ascertained by her own account that she was unharmed beyond a bruise or two. “Lady Seaton? Miss Seaton? But luckily you were both on the up side. So glad you are none the worse. Wilson looks shaky. Oh, no bones broken

here either. Now for the horse," and with some little trouble the poor creature, trembling and shaken, but no longer mischievous, was got upon its legs.

That done, Cumberland returned to his magnet. "Wonderful, was it not?" cried he; "a regular spill, and nobody the worse. Upon my word we could not have chosen a better place. This bog is like a sponge. I am afraid you must be wet. Had you not better rise, and——" he stopped abruptly, with an exclamation.

Madeline, with a cheek as white as snow, was gazing blindly before her; in her arms she held the treacherous parcel which had wrought the damage, and to which she had clung through all that had passed; but the fall had disclosed its nature. It was no harmless block of wood, but a slender wooden box, in which, well packed, there was, or had been, a dark square bottle, with whose late contents her dress and jacket were both com-

pletely saturated. The fumes of brandy filled the air.

One glance was sufficient for Cumberland. Action came to him the next instant as if by inspiration. Before either had spoken or Madeline had stirred, he had thrown off his rough outer coat and carefully wrapped it round her, and that before any other eye than his own could have noted what had happened. His next movement was to take the wreck of the breakage from her hand and convey it out of sight among the moss-heaps. "Now come," he whispered, and she understood and came. The others were at a short distance, and all might be concealed.

As it turned out, they were only just in time. Lady Seaton had begun to look round, to move, to make up her mind that she must have Mr Cumberland's arm for the rest of the way home—and well did Madeline know how much the poor affectionate mother had been spared by such timely promptitude.

But what to say to Cumberland? How to confess to him? Or did he need enlightenment at all? And oh, how shameful, how dastardly of Tom to make her the unconscious medium through which his hideous vice might be pursued! Poor simple Donald, little had he guessed what he was doing, what risk he was running; he, like herself, had doubtless been but an instrument in the hands of others. And what others? It was all a mystery, all a horrible, wretched, degrading perplexity.

One thing only was certain, and the brave girl's heart did not quail before it—Sir Thomas must be told, and none but herself should tell him.

"Can I do anything to help you?" The voice was Cumberland's, and it was his hands which were fastening the clasps at her throat. "I was afraid your cousin would get chilled," he had explained to Blanche; "she alighted in the wet bog, so I have cloaked her up,

and perhaps if we walk fast home, she will take no harm." Now it was, "Let them go on, we shall catch them up this moment; tell me can I—*can* I do anything?"

But she had to answer sorrowfully, "No."

No, he could do nothing. It would but have added to the shame and grief of the unhappy father to have known that another had, however involuntarily, been initiated into the secret trial of his life; and terrible as she felt the task to be, Madeline recognised instantly that there was no escape for her—she, and she only, must be the one to give her uncle the information which should cut him to the quick. Moreover, Tom—but she durst not think about Tom; she durst not call to mind anything which should make her path more beset than it was already. Sir Thomas *must* be told, she *must* be faithful, and—and the rest was in God's hands.

It added to her burden that of Sir Thomas

himself, Madeline—in common with the rest of the household,—stood deeply in awe. Never did she willingly cross his path ; and as for making little advances towards him, or holding pleasant intercourse with him, as she would undoubtedly have done towards a more accessible relative, such a thing never entered into her head.

True, he had never been unkind to her. She could not call to mind that she had ever received from him a sharp word in her life ; but he had held aloof from her as from others. He had never had, nor affected to have, any sort of interest in her concerns ; and he had never done more than briefly shake her hand morning and evening since she had come to reside under his roof.

As for kissing her !—And Madeline's soft, round little cheek would have tempted an anchorite.

Well, she had nothing to complain of ; only, if she could have gone to her uncle

as some uncles could have been gone to—if she could have held his hand and hid her face on his shoulder, and comforted him, and let him comfort her, how much easier it would have been! As it was, the poor little thing sighed—yes, even in Cumberland's presence, she sighed.

“Come in.”

Madeline had knocked at the door of her uncle's private sitting-room, and it was with no small surprise that Sir Thomas beheld the disturber of his peace, or, to speak more plainly, of his afternoon nap—a luxury he always indulged in after the early Sunday dinner, which was a heavier meal than ordinary at that hour. “Come in, my dear,” he said, not unkindly; and that the worthy baronet was not quite so far removed from sublunary affairs as his family supposed, may be gathered from the fact that the first-fruits of his amazement found vent in the inward ejaculation: “Humph! he might have come

to me first, I think,"—the "he" in no wise referring to his son.

"Am I disturbing you, uncle?"

"If you are, it is your first offence of the kind, my dear," replied Sir Thomas, with what was really a most respectable smile for an elderly gentleman interrupted in a comfortable snooze; "first misdemeanours are invariably condoned—eh, Madeline? Well, what is it? You look distressed, my dear. You surely have no cause? I have never, I hope, been harsh with you"—and to himself he thought—"nor will I ever be unjust. Dreadful as the loss will be, I will never stand in the way of any advantage to my brother's only child."

"If it is as I suppose, eh?" continued Sir Thomas, with increasing efforts to be kind and fatherly, "there is no need for such a very solemn little face, my lassie. Come, out with it. That artful fellow Cumberland——"

“Oh, he knows nothing—that is, I mean, I have told him nothing. He may have suspected—but, oh, uncle, could any one have told it would be so?”

“My dear, I hardly understand.”

“It was not his fault—he came to help me up.”

“Very natural. When you were thrown out of the car, I suppose?”

“And I was wet through, and I am afraid that he could not help knowing that I was.”

“Probably not. I cannot say I see the harm if he did.”

“But, uncle—it—it was not with water.”

“Not with water? What do you mean, child?”

“I was—oh, it was so dreadful,” sobbed Madeline,—“I held it in my arms—the parcel for Tom, and it must have been broken in the fall, and when I sat up in the bog, I was all over—brandy!”

## V.

TOM'S.

“What brutal mischief sits upon his brow!  
He may be honest—but he looks damnation.”

—DRYDEN.

THE word acted like an electric shock upon the unfortunate Sir Thomas.

No need for explanation or circumlocution once it were uttered. Starting upright in his chair, with a face that renewed all the terrors his former mildness had for a moment dissipated, he gave utterance to an asseveration which, whether excusable or not under the circumstances, struck a fresh chill to Madeline's heart.

“Brandy!” he cried. “Good God! Has he dared—has he actually dared, and man-

aged to elude me *again*? Marks—the hypocrite—the scoundrel—he is at the bottom of this. He goes to-morrow. He ought to go this instant—and I—I thought I had at last—and you too, unkind, ungrateful—you that I had looked upon as his best defence—how could you, how could you? You had seen him once, and you had promised me, and it had really seemed as if through you a way had been opened, but” (with a groan), “but I see I had begun to hope too soon.”

He was silent, and she continued weeping,—it was not a moment for words.

Presently, however, he raised his head.

“The cowardly scoundrels!—to bring a girl like you into it! They gave it you for him, and you were to take your opportunity for delivering it when no one was by, or you were to give it to Marks?”

She shook her head.

“Well, you do not know what you are doing, that is all that can be said for you,”

continued Sir Thomas. “ How is it likely that you would ? You only fancy that you are giving a little stimulant to a poor invalid —no doubt they tell you that,—but I tell you—I tell you, Madeline, and you may believe me, that call it what you will, you are killing that poor boy’s wretched body, and still more miserable soul. Oh, how I have tried to save him ! ” groaned the unhappy father ; “ how I have watched, and laboured, and tried to save him ! Long ago I saw it beginning. He is but a boy of eighteen now, but he has been at it for the last two or three years, always on the sly, always by corruption and artifice, always through the baseness and treachery of others. You would not believe, I could hardly tell you the means to which he has resorted ; and yet he is so clever, such an actor, so wonderfully acute, and cunning, and plausible, that he imposes on all who do not know him as I do. You, Madeline, it was

you who, when you found him lately in that deplorable state, first gave me hope that he might yet be reclaimed without the knowledge of others. My girl, you did not know him. You have not yet any conception of the tortuous underhand ways he goes about to get that accursed poison. There is nothing so low but what he would stoop to it, nothing so bad that he would stick at it. Drink, drink, drink,—again and again I have found out his accomplices ; and again and again he has bribed over new ones. Unluckily he has money of his own, which, so far, I have not been able to keep from him —that must be my next care. Since you came, and were so much with him, and especially since you had learned his wretched secret, and had promised me to watch over him, my heart had been more lightened than it had been for many a day. I had thought your presence had been, and was going to be, a safeguard. His mother fancied that

he took kindly to you too—and no doubt he does, no doubt he does"—bitterly—"but for what a cause! His poor mother, she so often speaks of your goodness to him, and the comfort that it is to her; for she still believes in him—she would not be a mother if she did not. She does not know, I pray Heaven she may never know, she has a drunkard for her son!"

The anguish in the father's tone, the hopeless despondency in his air and words, struck, with so profound a pity, the tender-hearted little Madeline, that it never once occurred to her to think anything of the frequent insinuations against herself which poor Sir Thomas, albeit a just man, could not refrain from making; and accordingly, even while he saw the tears pouring over her cheeks, he still concluded—or perhaps concluded all the more—that he had to deal with a culprit.

"How often have you given it him?"

pursued he, mournfully. “This is not the first time, I know; but on the only other occasion that I know of, your evident innocence made me believe——”

“Believe still, dear uncle,” cried she, suddenly—“believe still that you may trust me. Oh, you may, you may; I have not deceived you, I have not betrayed you. Never once since that time”—and she involuntarily shuddered—“never once has Tom had anything from me. On Thursday night——” She paused.

“He got nothing; Marks assured me he got nothing,” said Sir Thomas, eagerly, “and——”

“No, he got nothing. He has been very, very angry with me ever since,” whispered Madeline. “He will be still more angry now. Uncle, must I—must I stay with him so much alone? Does it—really—do —any good?”

“You are weary of your task already,”

said Sir Thomas, bitterly. "I might have known it would be so. It is one to wear out any one. I release you——"

"But I will not accept the release. Forgive me," all at once cried Madeline, straightening up her girlish form, and with again that fire in her eye and resolve on her brow which Tom had noticed. "Forgive me for even thinking of it. It was only for a moment. Now I am ready—I will not give up hope—together, dear uncle, *together*," and as she spoke she sank on her knees by his side. The poor old man took heart again.

"You see what he has brought me to," he said, with a faint smile. "I suspect everything and every one. You, Madeline, have acted in a noble, straightforward manner, and I treat you like a criminal! Poor Marks, you say, has proved so far incorruptible, and I was for dismissing him tomorrow! Then there is the shepherd, Donald—but—yes—he must go. He can-

not be perfectly innocent, even though he may be a cat's-paw in the hands of others. That he is in communication with blackguards who have no other means of access to my son is evident; he must have known *something*; and at all events he must not have a chance of repeating a stratagem which had so nearly succeeded. And there is one thing, Madeline, about this which gives me a sort of comfort—had these wretches not been hard up for a go-between, they would never have pitched upon you."

It might be a comfort to him, it was none to her; she saw in it only one of many instances of Tom's malice.

"Would you—could you go to his room now?" suggested Sir Thomas, almost timidly. "He is not alone, and with others there you would the more easily be able to allude to the accident. Cumberland will help you out."

"Yes, uncle, yes," and she was gone.

Poor Sir Thomas smiled. "Yes, uncle, yes," he said to himself; and more than once, as he sat and mused afterwards, he repeated inwardly, "Yes, uncle, yes," and it always brought a faint smile to his face.

Blanche, Flora, and Cumberland were all in Tom's room, and a snug and harmonious little party as heart could wish they seemed, no one being more amiable nor entering more genially into all that passed than the usually pettish and irritable invalid.

"Well, Madeline," he cried, gaily, "where have you been in hiding all this while? We have all been wondering. Come along. Here's Cumberland has been telling us some famous stories—ay, take a chair, and you will soon catch him up. He's in the middle of one."

"We shall be too many for you now, and I am afraid we have tired you already," suggested Cumberland, who had his own reasons for wishing to break up the party

now that it had had an addition. “Suppose we leave you with your sisters at present,” he continued, boldly.

“With my sisters! Humph!” replied Tom, while the sisters themselves looked somewhat blank at the proposal. “What do you want to run away for?” continued the speaker, querulously. “But I suppose it *is* slow for a fellow in here. Only being Sunday afternoon I should not have thought it was over lively anywhere. However, don’t stay on my account.”

“I am sure Mr Cumberland will stay if you wish it, Tom,” observed Blanche, brightening visibly. “It was merely out of consideration, for you know you are not to be overdone; but, indeed, Mr Cumberland, chatting quietly as we were doing just now does not in the least fatigue him—does it, Tom? And he often says if one or two would come in and talk among themselves he would rather have it than feeling obliged to talk himself.”

"Oh, I'll stay with pleasure, of course," said Cumberland, as readily as he could.  
"I only thought you might be glad of a rest."

"That's a privilege I often enjoy," observed Tom, drily.

Flora now took up the ball, and the ball in a double sense it was which turned in her hands.

"And, Mr Cumberland, did you notice Maggie Wardlaw? The youngest, you know,—the tomboy. Now tell me candidly, did you ever see anything like the frights those girls make of themselves, and Maggie especially? Don't, pray, be taken in by it, Mr Cumberland. Don't think they are very intellectual and superior, and all that sort of thing, because they are nothing of the kind. They are simply the Miss Wardlaws. They are the great folks of the place. They may do anything, wear anything, and be as mad as they please. Here's our bonnie little Madeline would have looked a guy in

Maggie Wardlaw's toque and feathers, and yet she asked me with the greatest complacency if I did not think they became her. I said——”

“Something silly, no doubt,” interposed Blanche, who was quick to perceive a certain absence which had crept over Cumberland’s attentive attitude, and which she put down to a man’s well-known dislike of female detraction. “Flora gets into scrapes that cleverer and more ill-natured girls keep out of.”

“Thank you, dear sister. Cleverer! I am quite satisfied with my own cleverness, I assure you. And as for scrapes,” cried the voluble young lady——

“You never know whether you are in them, or not. Well, it is a pity to take up the cudgels for one who is not grateful; and as by your own account you were——”

“What was I?” for the speaker had stopped.

"Upon my word, I don't know," said Blanche laughing, for the two were on the best of terms, and her interference had been genuinely good-natured ; "only from your face I felt sure that you had been letting your tongue run too fast, and that you might as well keep the repetition of it to yourself. What has become of that headache you had this morning ?" she continued, archly.

"Gone like the morning dew. It came and went with the greatest accommodation. If I had been at church, for instance, I should have been thrown out of the car like all of you ; next, I should have been frightened and lost my appetite for dinner, as Madeline did ; next, my going would have left no place for Mr Cumberland, and so he would not have been here to enliven this dreary afternoon ;" and as she spoke she looked at Cumberland, as though demanding the flattering response at which he was usually so ready.

There was, however, no answer at all.

“Mr Cumberland does not thank you,” suggested Blanche, also turning to him.

“Eh, Cumberland, what have you to say to that?” even Tom now chimed in.

And he did not hear one of them—he had not heard a word of the whole foregoing dialogue.

Madeline, when she entered, had seated herself within the recess of the farthest window, a window which commanded a view of the rocks and waves, and through which a red autumnal sunset was now faintly gleaming.

She was so far within the recess as to be nearly out of sight of all, except Cumberland, who, although he had drawn near the opening, was still within view. He was leaning against the wall, mute and motionless ; but there was no disguising the object of his reverie—no mistaking whose was the form on which his silent, absorbed, all-engrossed gaze was bent.

It was a gaze never to be effaced from memory, never to be forgotten by any who beheld it.

With an emotion in which rage, triumph, and amazement struggled for the mastery, Tom Seaton was perhaps the first to realise the truth. He was furious, he was delighted, he ground his teeth with vexation, he laughed in his heart with pleasure ; the sight gave him a thousand pangs, and yet every pang was a sort of ecstasy. “I have her now,” he cried to himself, and beneath the sofa-covering his hands clenched till the nails dug into the flesh. “Oh yes, I have her now.”

All his recent gaiety and sociability had been feigned ; he had heard of the breakdown, and had not dared to inquire further. The relief on discovering that in all probability Madeline alone knew what the parcel which had disappeared among the moss-heaps contained, was considerable, for he was by no means destitute of a desire to

hide his unhappy propensity ; but still he had been anxious and curious, provoked also by his loss, and by the probable necessity for devising new means to replace it, altogether in no real good-humour, and with no real interest in the scene until this moment, the moment when he learned Madeline's secret from Cumberland's eyes.

“By Jove, I never thought of that !” he muttered ; “I think I can put a spoke in that wheel too, my young friends. You are much too good for each other—much, much too good. So that is what Miss Madeline has been up to of late. And that was what made her baby face all red and glazed when she had to give up the ball. I was more in luck than I thought. Oh, you shall give up more than that, my dear. And I owe you one, too, Mr Frank Cumberland, for taking me in like this. What a confounded fool I have been ! I thought it was for my sisters' sake, either or both, that I was receiving all those

delicate attentions which this fine gentleman bestowed on me, and thought showed him off to advantage as contrasted with the poor cripple. The poor cripple ain't quite the idiot you take him for, Frank. If I don't think of *something*——” and he breathed hard and fast.

All at once he dashed himself down on his pillows with a laugh that rang through the room.

“Really, Tom, how strange you are!” exclaimed Flora, sharply. “What in the world are you laughing at? There is nothing amusing going on that I can see; or if there is, you need not keep it to yourself.”

“What amuses me might not amuse you,” replied her brother; “people must find out their own jokes. I had a very funny one just now; but it is strictly private. All the better for that. Public jokes lose half their flavour; this one,” and he smacked his lips, “this one was tip-top.”

“In that case you would prefer to enjoy it alone, I suppose,” said she, with a toss of her head. “It is a pity we should remain to spoil it——”

“Well, it is. You may be off as soon as you please.”

“You are really intolerable, Tom; you grow worse every day. A perfect boor. Certainly I shall not remain where I am an *intruder*,” and with a heightened colour and hastened tread she swept past the window. Ah, it was not for Tom that speech and that departure; to Flora it was of less than no consequence what a brother, to whom she was so indifferent, thought or said. Cumberland was the real offender: Cumberland, whom neither Tom’s boisterous mirth nor her own displeasure had yet disturbed; but who had even taken advantage of it to approach the object of his reverie, and was now murmuring in her ear.

Nor was Blanche much less tranquil than her sister. "Absurd!" she muttered. "Ridiculous for Mr Cumberland to try to make a fuss about poor little Madeline, and turn her head. I declare she looks quite perturbed. I suppose he is trying some of his flirting ways on with her, and as nobody has ever flirted with her in her life, she does not know how to take it. She has no idea that he has paid both Flora and me any number of compliments. In reality he does not care for anybody; he is not thinking of falling in love at all. Why, I always supposed he looked upon Maddy as a sort of child. How she is blushing now! and even he looks conscious—tiresome man. He will really make her believe that he is in earnest if he goes on like that; well, I shall give her a hint, I know; and perhaps if I depart now, she will know better than to stay on here alone with the two men."

And, indeed, Madeline was following as fast as her little feet could patter, when Tom called her back.

“ You will just stay where you are, young lady. We will reverse your former arrangement, Cumberland ; my sisters will go, you and my cousin will stay. Here comes the tea-tray. Now Madeline, my dear, sweet Madeline, sit there where I can see you, and pour out the tea. She is worth looking at, is she not, Cumberland ? And as good and kind and amiable as she is pretty. She does whatever I tell her, fetches whatever I bid her, and suits herself to my fancies in every respect. Dear Madeline ! I am so fond of Madeline. We have not a secret from each other ; have we, Maddy ? Her happiest hours she spends in this room. She would not leave me even for the ball ; did they tell you ? Ah, she’s an angel ! You would not suppose I was a lady’s man, would you, Cumberland ? You would not think to look

at me that I could be Madeline's fancy ? But so it is, and she knows it's true ; oh, my pretty Madeline—don't be modest. How can we see your sweet face when you hang your head like that ? Ha, ha, ha ! What fun ! oh, my goodness ! what splendid fun ! ” pointing with his finger at the trembling girl, who in speechless distress knew not which way to turn ; while Cumberland listened in petrified amazement to a turn of Tom's humour he had never witnessed before.

It was not, however, the cue of the malignant jester to carry the jest too far ; on the present occasion all he sought was to give the impression of a poor weak creature who was in a manner subject to him and under his influence ; and that by a very little foolish badinage, seasoned with allusions which could not but have an odious meaning for her, while seemingly harmless to the uninitiated, he could disconcert and annoy, and

cause her to look guilty and miserable, he very well knew,—and on that knowledge he acted.

Seeing that Cumberland also looked grave, he now, however, changed his note.

“Oh, come, Maddy,” he said, quite amiably, “there is nothing to be vexed about. You must learn to stand a little chaff. Come, now, I won’t say any more. Cumberland knows I am only taking a rise out of you. If you were not so awfully easy to get a rise out of, I should not be so tempted. Come; as Flora says, I’m only a rude boy. They will never allow that I am a *man*, you know, Cumberland—oh dear no; I am to stick at being a boy just as I am to stick to this sofa all my life. Now here’s Madeline sulking because I chaff her a little. Lor’, what a thing a girl is! Well, then, Cumberland, you bring her round. Ay, she’ll listen to you. I’m not good enough to approach my sovereign lady; besides, I can’t get up and

stand before her. She likes homage ; down on your knees, Cumberland."

"Your cousin is very good to put up with you as she does," said Cumberland, angrily. Then checking himself, "I suppose the truth is you are not very well to-day, and we had better go."

"We!" echoed Tom.

Cumberland reddened in spite of himself.

"Does 'we' mean you and Madeline?" continued Tom, slowly raising himself on his elbow.

"That is as she pleases," said Cumberland.

## VI.

## A BARGAIN SCORNED.

“Act well at the moment, and you have performed  
A good action to all eternity.”

—LAVATER.

“SHE has been restive and rebellious for the last three months,” said Tom Seaton to himself, as he looked from time to time furtively at the pair who were now rather silently sitting side by side; “from exactly one month since that puppy came to the place. She has not been half so docile as she used to be. Now I know why. I know, and I shall take my measures accordingly. He has heard about me, has he? I read it in his face that he has. Well, then, let me see. Faith, now, I have got it, I do believe.

Good luck! I see my way. If he can be got to think she was bringing me that bottle that smashed to-day, that I am in the habit of getting it from her, and that we are both in league to cheat the parent birds—moreover, that we are assisted by a gang of dirty fellows with whom Madeline is in constant communication,—he would not be disposed to look upon her as quite the spotless lamb he does at present. He would be disconsolate and oppressed, in a proper state of mind for something to happen—something she must be got to do or say in keeping with that character. What it must be I have not time to consider at present; but there will not be much difficulty. She is such a little fool, so easily worked upon on any point but the one——” In saying which, the speaker referred to a trait in Madeline’s character with which the reader has not yet been made acquainted.

In her childhood she had been subjected to

influences which had left her, although otherwise healthy, intensely and acutely nervous. Every circumstance and surrounding of her present sphere increased the disorder. The Castle itself, weird, cranky, and ghost-like, was, to one accustomed to a modern comfortable English mansion, with its well-lit landings, its compact suites of rooms, and its general air of cheerful commonplaceness, a strange and terrifying habitation. There was something chilling, sombre, and desolate in its long thin passages leading nowhere, its many winding rounds of turret-stair, its numbers of unused closets and chambers, and, more than all besides, in its owl-haunted attics and battlements. Many a time had Madeline shuddered and paled as she heard the sea wind whistling through the crevices of the grim old ivy-covered walls, when she called to mind Tom's ghost stories and ghostly allusions.

She had hated--oh, how she had come to

hate and to dread her new home, and to yearn for the gentler, fairer scenes of her childhood! until—ah! we must not say until when.

“She will be easily made to expose herself, if I can keep off an explanation in the meantime,” thought Tom. “So now to get rid of this Cumberland, and discover what really did take place this afternoon.”

Fortune favoured him. To Cumberland’s infinite vexation there came a message at that very moment for him, to the effect that a neighbour had called, who had been on his way to the Moor Farm, but that on hearing Mr Cumberland was at the Castle, he had come also to the Castle, as his object was to carry Mr Cumberland off with him. He was now in the drawing-room, and Lady Seaton had sent to let Mr Cumberland know.

As nothing had been said about Cumberland’s remaining on, and as he himself did

not know whether he had been expected to do so or not, a more unfortunately ill-timed visit could not have been made. In vain did the unlucky Cumberland cudgel his brains, as he reluctantly followed the messenger to the drawing-room. He could not, when thus suddenly taxed, and when his mind had been so completely engrossed by other thoughts, devise even the hollowest of pretexts for getting rid of his friend, or, worse still, for not being obliged to depart with him; and unless a fresh invitation was forthcoming from Sir Thomas or his lady, and that on the instant, he saw his case was hopeless.

Had he but been given time—had he had the remotest idea of such a contingency arising—he might have managed; but such a thing had never happened before; neither Harry Thornton nor any one else had ever hunted him out on any previous Sunday, and that he should have chosen to do it on

this one particular Sunday did seem an unkind stroke of fate.

One feeble effort, however, he made.

“Really, I am afraid I ought to go home,” he said. “You see—it’s awfully kind of you, Harry, but you do live such a terribly long way off. If I go with you I don’t see how I am to walk all that way back to my diggings to-night, I am so beastly lazy. If you were anywhere nearer, as near as this, for instance”—(for what will not a desperate young man say at a crisis?)—“why, of course, it would be different; I should be delighted. But to-night, yes, to-night, it’s wet, and—and I think I had better get home.”

Even so broad a hint was not taken. Lady Seaton who was sufficiently glad to see a visitor to the two o’clock luncheon dinner, and was usually hospitable enough to be depended on for further civility, was on this occasion not sorry that Cumberland

should depart before the evening. Cumberland had done all that she had brought him there to do ; he had entertained Sir Thomas, sat the whole afternoon with Tom, and prescribed for and bound up Bubble's sick toe ; and though he was sitting with the dog in his arms, pulling its ears, nestling its black nose to his cheek, and going through all the endearments in which Bubble luxuriated, she still thought she would prefer to be alone that evening.

“Have you seen Bubble die for his Queen ?” inquired Cumberland, putting off the evil day, and at the same time attempting conciliation with his refractory hostess.

That done, “Now he must drink confusion to Gladstone. Bubble, you must know, Harry, is a Conservative—not a rank Radical like you—now, see how he drinks it ;” very, very slowly pouring out some tea into a saucer.

Then, when the laugh had subsided, Bul-

ble had to sit up for One, Two, Three, to snap at biscuits, to go through, in fact, all the stale, time-honoured feats ; but though her ladyship admired and applauded, and peered round the table-legs to see, yet this could not go on for ever.

“ Well, the rain’s off. Don’t you think we had better be moving ? ” said the young Scotchman, who was himself equipped for any sort of weather. “ Good - bye, Sir Thomas. I’ll let you know about those pheasants’ eggs as soon as I hear. Good-bye,” to Lady Seaton. “ Good-bye, Puggy,” —and so on all round.

Cumberland, with the best grace he could, had to follow. No regrets, nor hopes, nor any intimation that he had been meant to stay, were forthcoming ; and though this seemed strange to him, as doubtless it may to the reader, we may inform the latter that it was simply owing to the fact of the elderly lady’s being out of spirits from the effects of

her afternoon's fright, and the younger ones out of humour from the more recent experience in Tom's room. "We really did not want him any longer to-night," observed her ladyship, addressing the company generally. "I like Mr Cumberland very much —as much as any one; but I do not feel up to strangers just now. My head aches, and I should like to be quiet and comfortable. Sir Thomas, too, is not very well. If we had asked Mr Cumberland we must have asked Mr Thornton as well, and that would have been two extra, and it is only five o'clock now; we have so many hours still before us, they would not have cared to take their books and read, and——" and in short she was well rid of them.

Wonderful to relate, neither daughter raised a protest. On any other occasion dissenting voices and pouting lips would have been the almost certain rejoinder, but now both sat mute; while Sir Thomas, too

much taken up with his own grief and perplexity, which had just received a fresh accession, to hear a syllable of his wife's argument, was fain to let it drop without entering on the subject at all. "I must go by the boat myself on Tuesday, and find out where and who those rascals are," he was inwardly resolving. "Brandy is not like whisky. It must have come through several hands."

Meantime Tom had detained Madeline. "There is no need for you to go, Maddy," he observed, with a significance which instantly sent her back to the chair from which she had half arisen when Cumberland rose. "*You* need not go because Cumberland is sent for. Good-bye,"—to him—"Good-bye. Don't trouble to take this long journey up-stairs again before you go. It is a bore that you have to go—a bore for us at least, not for you, for no doubt it will be livelier at the Thorntons than here on Sunday—we are

humdrum folks ; Madeline sits with her Bible before her, or teaches the little, dirty, bare-footed imps about ; she is going off to them now, ain't you, Maddy ? And Blanche and Flora—well, I won't keep you. Oh, don't wait for her, she will stop and read to me, as a proper Sabbath occupation," gravely.

There was no support to be had from Tom.

"And so you thought you were going too," began he, eyeing her steadily as the door closed. "Fie, Madeline ! 'Tis well you have the grace to blush, my dear ; you were only stopped just in time ; and to be running after a young man like that!"

"*Tom !*"

"And now as red as a peony !"

"I am red with the fire—and the tea—and—and your saying such things. It is time for my class, and that is why I am going, and I cannot stay longer——"

"But you will have to stay longer, whether you will or no, my young friend," said Tom,

with an insolent smile. “ You will have to give me an account of a certain parcel of wood that was intrusted to your care, or at least which was to have been so. Where is it ? Did you leave it behind ? Was it too heavy ? ”

“ It was not too heavy, but,” said Madeline, quieted down as the recollection of her charge came back to her,—“ but it—was broken.”

“ I thought as much.” To her surprise, Tom looked almost amused. “ Yes, I had made up my mind to that,” he said. “ It was a good dodge, was it not ? I’ll be bound neither you nor any of you had an inkling of what was inside beforehand. He gave it you at the churchyard gate, did he ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Handed it up to the car ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And you put it into the basket?—but no, you were told to hold it in your arms—did you hold it in your arms ? ”

“Yes.”

“Yes—yes—yes,” echoed Tom, but with tolerable equanimity; “I can get nothing but ‘yes’ out of you to whatever I say. You have no sense of the ludicrous, Madeleine. To think of your receiving that neat little parcel, and I daresay my mother imploring you to take the greatest care of it, and Wilson, no doubt, made to wait for it—and oh, if you had only been permitted to carry out in full the glorious scheme, and deliver it up with your own fair fingers! As it was, I would have given a good glass of what was inside for a sight of your face when the smash came. Ha, ha, ha! Where did it go? What became of it?”

“Mr Cumberland threw it away among the moss-heaps.”

“Cumberland did? So, so, Mr Cumberland! that’s another for you. Oh, I have got a good deal to think over from this afternoon,

my dear Madeline ; don't suppose that was a facer for me. And how did Cumberland look ? What did he say ? ”

“ He—he said nothing.”

“ Nothing ! What did he do ? ”

“ Took the bottle and threw it away.”

Tom paused. “ Who else was by ? ”

“ No one.”

“ No one ! What do you mean ? Why don't you tell the truth ? No one ! How could there have been ‘ no one ’ ? ” cried Tom, impatiently ; “ where were they all ? And was there no smell—no delicious, heavenly aroma ? ”

“ Yes, there was.”

“ Of course there was. It went all over you, I should say.”

“ Yes, it did.”

“ And yet you tell me that nobody suspected anything. It went all over you, over your nice Sunday frock and jacket ; and there you sat reeking of brandy—a pretty

object, too, for a young lady on her way home from church,—and yet no one was any the wiser !”

Madeline was silent. In her inmost soul she shrank from unveiling Cumberland’s thought for her ; the swift promptitude which had shrouded her from observation, and warded off remark. His care, his sympathy, had robbed the moment of half its terrors ; and now to have to reveal it to Tom !

“ Come, no nonsense,” said he, roughly ; “ there is something behind this. People are blind enough and stupid enough, but somebody must have had a nose and an eye. Out with it, the truth ; it will have to come at last, so there is no use shirking.”

“ If I did shirk,” said Madeline, with spirit, “ it was because it was such a disgrace to you——”

“ Never mind about that. Say what happened.”

“Mr Cumberland took off his overcoat and wrapped it round me.”

“The devil he did! Impudent jackanapes! He was by way of making it a secret between you and him, was he? Confound his airs! I thought he was more supercilious than usual this afternoon, and so *that* was at the bottom of it. Yes, somehow I fancied he knew a thing or two. Hang his coat! It is to be hoped he likes an odorous lining, and one that will make an excellent reputation for him—*I say!*” Suddenly, to the horror of his auditor, the cripple sat up for two full seconds bolt-upright on his couch, and, with dilated eyes and jaws apart, stared at her, as one evidently newly struck by a purpose or idea.

“I must go now,” she said hastily, and once more tried to move to the door.

“Well, you may; I have got out of you all I wanted to know; only one thing—stop!” cried Tom, as she was leaving the

room—"stop! You are quite sure—positive—that no one saw or noticed anything except that fellow?"

"Quite sure."

"Then I have a proposition to make. Sit down a moment, can't you? and let me think." He frowned, with his cheek on his hand. "That alters the case," he said after a minute; "the thing can be done again." Involuntarily Madeline shuddered. "Poh! you little shivering fool!" cried Tom, contemptuously, "don't stand vibrating there like a poodle dog. I tell you I am not angry with you; I don't suppose you threw yourself out of the car to spite me; and as for Cumberland—well, I am bound to think he meant to do me a good turn, and that I shall have to look on you and him as my friends in future, eh? You seem to be uncommonly good friends between yourselves. Look you, Madeline, have you ever found me *blind*?"

By his smile she read his meaning only too well, and a flood of crimson mounting to her brow, showed that she did so.

“ You are pretty quick, too,” continued Tom, nodding his satisfaction. “ You comprehend without waste of words, I will say that for you. Now you and I must understand each other. I, on my part, will give you my solemn word of honour to say nothing to any one as to my discovery, if you, on your side, will give me the same, and say nothing of yours. Moreover, it must be agreed upon that both be equally reticent as to anything that happens in future. Do you follow me? You shall meet Cumberland——”

“ Oh, Tom ! ”

“ Well, well, there shall be no particulars : all I mean is, I shall not interfere between you and him in any way ; indeed I shall rather help things on than otherwise,—provided — always provided — you play me

equally fair. Stop, and hear me out ; I am not asking you to do anything ; as it goes against your grain, you shan't be employed any more—I think I have served you out already for previous insubordination — but all that is now required of you is to shut your eyes and hold your tongue. As to your clothes to - day, what have you done with them ? ”

“ Locked them up.”

“ I suppose they are spoilt ? ”

“ The gown is.”

“ Give it to Jane to get rid of ; to Jane, remember. She will ask no questions, and I will, myself, make you a present of another. You may accept a gift from a cousin, you know ; and it will pass that the other was ruined in the bog. You see I can behave as well as other people when I choose. Now we have made our bargain, haven’t we ? You have nothing to do, ab-

solutely nothing. As you have sworn you told nobody——”

“ I have *not* sworn that,” said Madeline.

“ Well, Cumberland found it out for himself; you did not tell him. I exonerate you. As you have told nobody——”

“ I *have* told somebody.”

“ You—have ? ”

“ I have told your father.”

“ My *father!* ” cried Tom, with a shout.

“ My father ! ”

“ I have told him now; I will tell him again.” He scarcely knew the pale bold face that fronted him. “ I will tell him every time I ever find, or hear of, or suspect that you—that there is this—traffic—going on. I will have no part in your shameful bargain. I will not hold my tongue—God forbid that I should ! He will help me—He will—He will ! Oh no, I do not fear—I am afraid no more. Tom,

whatever you do — or say — or whatever happens, I am afraid no more."

She raised her clasped hands to heaven as she spoke, stood one moment still in the doorway, and glided noiselessly out.

He did not attempt to detain her.

## VII.

## FLORA'S LESSON.

"The mind of mortals, in perverseness strong,  
Imbibes with dire docility the wrong."

—JUVENIS.

"FLORA," said Tom, on the following day, "it seems to me that your friend Cumberland has not been acting quite on the square by you and Blanche."

"What—what do you mean?" replied she, somewhat taken aback by so very personal a remark.

"I don't pretend to know about such things, of course," said Tom, mildly. "It is not likely that my opinion can be worth much, and perhaps I am mistaken altogether."

It may have been a mere fancy of my own, but I had certainly thought that our acquaintance at the Moor Farm had been growing of late rather particular in his attentions to *me*—and the poor brother always knows what *that* means. However, if you are satisfied—”

“ Why—why—satisfied ? Ye—es, to be sure,” said Flora, moving some ornaments on the mantelpiece uneasily. “ That is to say, Mr Cumberland and I are very good friends—”

“ And *you*? Oh, it was you, then ? ”

“ Was ! ”

“ I mean it was not Blanche ? ”

“ Blanche ? No, indeed.”

“ Then it was as I thought. He had been paying court to you ; he had sought you out ; at any rate he had preferred you to Blanche—or, at least, he had not preferred Blanche to you. That was the state of affairs a week ago. Did it strike you that

it was not precisely the state of affairs yesterday?"

" You mean, I suppose, that yesterday he was talking to Madeline ? "

" Talking ? Well, call it that, if you like. I should have given it a stronger name."

" I don't know, I am sure," said Flora, reluctantly. " Mr Cumberland is a flirt, of course, and I must own that yesterday I was surprised." But then, she did not wish to allow as much to Tom. That she had herself received a blow, she now knew ; but to do both of the Miss Seatons justice, neither of them, for worlds, would have laid claim, except in the veriest jest, to a man who had not openly declared himself. To have seriously owned herself wounded or mortified was what Flora would as soon have thought of doing as of tearing out her heart in the flesh.

" I was surprised at Maddy," she pursued ; " it was so unlike her. As a rule, she never

opens her lips to Mr Cumberland, and never seems to take any notice, when we are all open-mouthed in his praise. As for him, of course a man may do anything.”

“ That’s your creed, is it? A man may do anything. Oh—oh, then of course I have nothing more to say;” and he affected to turn round on his pillow, and have done with the matter.

His sister, however, remained in the room.

“ I suppose you are alluding to those two in the window yesterday?” she said at last; “ or, do you mean that they—that there was anything went on afterwards?”

“ Rather. But what’s the odds? A man may do anything, you know. Cumberland is, no doubt, of your opinion, and he and Maddy seem to understand each other.”

“ Were they here for long, after we left?”

“ Quite long enough—at least for me. By no means long enough for either of them, I should say. Cumberland looked as black as

thunder when he got Harry Thornton's message ; he was keen enough to have remained on here till midnight, once you and Blanche were out of the way. Now, my dear girl, don't let us have any more humbugging ; you are dying to know the truth, and I am ready to tell it you. It is this : Cumberland is red-hot in love with Madeline, and she, little fool, reciprocates the attachment. That is the proper phrase, isn't it ? Now, what do you say to that, Miss Flora ? Come, own up, and I'll tell you something more, something that you will like a good deal better than that,—spice to the wine—syrup to the medicine. I have not yet exhausted my stock of information ; but unless you are going to be straight and open with me, and put away your scornful airs, I shall just shut up, and say nothing more."

"I am sure I—I don't know what you mean," murmured she, in a subdued tone, "you are so odd. What do you want?"

"I'll tell you fast enough what I want. *I* have no secrets ; don't *you* have any. Am I not right in supposing that Cumberland made all the running with you and Blanche when first he came ; that he cut out all the fellows who had been at your heels before ; that he conjointly spooned you and Blanche——"

"No—not Blanche."

"And certainly not Madeline."

"I—really never thought of Madeline. I —don't know——"

——"The truth, Miss Flora, the truth."

"The truth, Tom, is simply this : Mr Cumberland has been flirting with us all, and he—he is a better hand at it than we are ;" and an honest tear, which was swiftly concealed, rose to the giddy girl's eye as she spoke ; she had been more interested, more captivated than she herself knew.

"That being the case, you had better forget him sharp," said Tom, coolly.

"But how can we forget him if he likes—  
I mean really likes Madeline?"

"He has got to forget her."

"I do not see that," said Flora, after a pause. "She will never refuse him."

"He must never ask her."

"Tom, I do not understand you," cried his sister. "Never ask her! Do you mean—do you suppose—that I—that any of us would do anything to prevent it? Do you imagine that I would treat any one, least of all poor dear little Madeline, so? If *that* is your idea, sir, you have come to the wrong person. Maddy is welcome to Mr Cumberland for me. I—don't think he has behaved altogether well,—I can't say I do; but if what you say is true, she at least is not to blame; he might have been more honest—at least more open;—but at any rate we cannot say he has done anything to justify a withdrawal of our friendship. If he marries Madeline——"

“Ah, but he shan’t marry Madeline.”

“Who is to prevent him? You?”

“No, not me, Miss Minx; you might have spared your taunt. Not but what perhaps I may be at the bottom of it—however, there is no need to quarrel. I know what you wish to say, you have been rather ‘done’ in this matter; but for all that, you don’t mean to behave shabbily, and, of course, it would be behaving shabbily—dirt shabbily—to try to chisel your poor friendless cousin out of an eligible suitor. The point is, whether such a suitor presents himself in the person of Mr Frank Cumberland? I say, No.”

“Why not? There can be no sort of objection to Mr Cumberland. You know,” she added, with a slight blush, “you know how pleased mamma was at hearing from the Wardlaws’ friends, who are his neighbours in Devonshire, such a good account of him.”

“ What did they say ? ”

“ Oh, that he is rich, popular, well-born, his own master—everything.”

“ It did not occur to them to add ‘ respectable ’ ? ”

“ I daresay it did ; but, of course, *that* we can see for ourselves. Having been so much with us for the last four or five months——”

“ Three and a half.”

“ Enough at any rate to know what is in him.”

“ That just shows the contrary—or rather it shows how impossible it is for women to find out at all ; it is a man who is needed in a case of the kind. Oh, you don’t think I am much of a man ; but any way I have found out one thing about this fine Cumberland of yours that not one of you has ever spotted, or would ever have spotted until it was too late. Once married, his wife would have found it out fast enough.”

“ Tom ! —What is it ? —”

"Oh, you needn't look so scared. It's the same with lots of fellows; only one doesn't choose them for near connections, if one happens to know. Luckily I have discovered it just in time."

"Discovered it! Discovered what?"

"That Cumberland—drinks!" said Tom, almost in a whisper.

There was a long pause. Even the thoughtless Flora was too deeply shocked to speak.

"Of course I should never have exposed him," continued Tom; "of course I should have held my tongue as a fellow ought; but when I saw what went on between him and Madeline yesterday, and when he could even come to the house with a bottle of brandy hid under his coat—hush!—whatever you do, don't let this out to a living soul—it is my secret——"

"Not altogether. Oh, Tom, I can hardly believe it,—but—but it must have been that; then—oh, how dreadful!"

"'Sh! Do take care. If any one should come in,—and I tell you, you must be careful. Come nearer here, and remember, if Madeline or any one comes in, change the subject at once—at least unless I continue it. What were you going to say?"

"His coat—I passed it—it was hanging up in the hall, but not in the usual place——"

—“Ah—h!”

"It was at the other end, on a peg by itself, and I happened to go by that way, and could not think what it was, for there was the most extraordinary smell of brandy. I stopped, and Mr Cumberland, who was at the dining-room door, rushed towards me, and began asking after my headache, and talking about the ball, and saying he was sure that I should catch cold there, and must not remain in that draughty place,—and all the time he spoke he was hurrying me away, so that I never thought of it again until now. Tom, *could* it have been——?"

"Why, of course," said Tom ; "the bottle got broken in the smash, and the contents drenched him. You never noticed it afterwards ? "

"No, I cannot say I did."

"I did. That was how I knew, and some one else did—ay, and here she comes—that's her tap. Now," leaning forward, and putting his hand to the side of his mouth ; "now—watch."

"Aunt Julia sent me with this note," said Madeline, to whom, it is needless to say, her cousin had alluded. "The man is waiting." Not a word, not a sign, did the messenger give that she knew it was from Cumberland ; not a flicker of anxiety as to the contents betrayed itself.

"Cumberland's man ?" inquired Tom.

"Aunt Julia only said 'the man.'"

"Of course it's he," said Tom. "Give me a pencil—I have a message for the man as well as for the master," under his breath ;

"my good star sent him here to-day."

Aloud—"That half sheet of paper, Flora, please—the *half* sheet, I tell you; it is not for Cumberland himself—anything will do."

She obeyed, and he scrawled hastily a few words in pencil, then folded it up and rang the bell.

"Why, you have not even opened the note!" exclaimed his sister, surprised.

Her brother gave her a look. She imagined she understood, and held her tongue. A housemaid entered with coals, and made up the fire. It might have been seen, had any one noticed, that she had not been required to do so, and that she gave her young master a quick, interrogative glance, as she entered.

"Here, Jane, give this to Mr Cumberland's groom," said the invalid, holding out the twisted scrap of paper towards her—"give it him; come here——" and the rest of the direction was lost on the cousins; "and, I say, tell

him to wait for a message," continued Tom, aloud ; "there will be one by Marks directly."

Then he broke the envelope. "Oh—ah—yes, that will do very well. He must not come to-day though. I am not up to visitors to-day; and to-morrow—— See here, Flora : will you give Marks this message, that my father will call on him to-morrow evening ?"

"To-morrow evening !"

"To-morrow evening. You told me, yourself, that Sir Thomas goes by the boat to-morrow, and returns in the evening ; well, he will look in at the farm on his way home —you know it is not a quarter of a mile out of his way—and——"

"But papa hates calling, and at that hour. And besides, we are dining out."

"I tell you he will do it," cried Tom, impatiently ; "leave it to me how or why. Now don't mistake ; and come back—do you hear ? —come back at once. I want you."

Madeline was following her cousin out of

the room, but she was stopped. "Just wait till she comes back," said Tom, indifferently; "there's something she is bothering about and wants you to clear up. I haven't time to explain. But, Madeline, bear in mind one thing"—his tone changed, and she knew he had come to the point—"whatever happens, reveal nothing. Oh, you'll be asked to tell no lies. Just keep quiet, and she will mystify herself.—Now Flora," as she re-entered, for Marks had been at hand, ever on the watch against outside communication; "now Flora, ask Madeline, if you choose, whether she noticed anything peculiar about Cumberland yesterday—or perhaps I ought to say, about Cumberland's topcoat. Madeline had plenty of him and his conversation yesterday," continued Tom, significantly; "and if she did not observe anything, it is fair to think there has been some mistake."

"Did you happen to notice anything, Maddy?" inquired Flora. "I mean, did you

notice—it seems such an odd thing to say, but I fancied—I hardly like to say it—that when the coat was hanging up in the hall, it—well—it smelt of brandy ? ”

Alas ! there was no need to say the last word ; the overpowering colour which suffused her cousin’s conscious cheek, the tell-tale quiver of the lip, the stricken silence, all too surely told of knowledge and of secrecy.

“ Oh, come, you take it too seriously, both of you,” said Tom, and each thought she knew why he so spoke. “ Flora makes a mountain out of a mole-hill, eh, Maddy ? Evidently *you* had observed nothing. Run along now. When I have one of you, I don’t need the other, and you see I am not on ceremony. Ta-ta ! ”

“ *Well !* ” he said, as the door closed.

“ She knows,—and *yet !* ” cried Flora, really distressed ; “ oh, how can Madeline ? It can only be because she is so young, that she

has no idea of what a dreadful thing it is. Quite evidently she knew what I was going to say before ever I said it! Did you not see how she changed colour the moment I spoke about the coat——”

“And they tell me he actually wrapped it round her when she got wet in the bog. Such cheek!” said Tom. “I daresay he did it on the spur of the moment, however. To do him justice, no doubt he forgot about the bottle then.”

“But to think of Madeline’s knowing! Oh, I am sure she knew. She did not look the least surprised or startled, only afraid and ashamed. Oh, Tom, I couldn’t have believed it. What would papa say?”

“So strict as he always is in such matters. So terribly down upon any one who only goes in for an occasional spree. For a real incurable secret drinker he would have no mercy.”

“No, indeed,” said Flora, gravely.

She waited a moment, and then added

with more vivacity, “ How did you first find out ? ”

“ That is not a girl’s business. I have my ways and means ; you have yourself to-day produced some valuable corroborative evidence.”

“ But I might have been mistaken, you know.”

“ Were you mistaken ? ”

She could not say she had been. Every moment the recollection grew more and more distinct.

“ Now I am going to produce one more witness,” said Tom, perceiving from her air of thoughtful disquietude that she was still unwilling to be hurried into premature conclusions, or condemnation of an absent person without proof positive. “ Just pull Marks’s bell, will you ? He doesn’t come unless I ring the big bell, and that only when it’s rung twice.”

“ Marks,” as the butler appeared, “ Miss Flora thought there was a curious smell of

brandy in the hall yesterday afternoon. She says it was as if some had been spilt."

Marks looked hard at the speaker.

"Oh, I'm not saying that it was so, of course," continued Tom, easily. "I only wished you to satisfy Miss Flora. She says it was as strong as possible, and that there was no mistaking it. It seems a queer thing. It was close to the stand—— No, by the way, you said it was not by the stand, Flora, but away at the other end of the hall, where Mr Cumberland had hung up his greatcoat."

It would not be correct to say that Marks uttered an exclamation, but certainly his lips fell apart even as Flora's had done at the same point. "That was his game, was it?" he ejaculated, internally.

"Oh, you had perceived something?" said Tom, looking at him; and "Did you notice anything yourself?" inquired the young lady, in a breath.

"Yes, sir, I had. Yes, Miss Flora, I did," replied the man, sturdily. "Mr Cumberland

had been bringing something here he shouldn't ha' brought; he hadn't no business to bring what he had there under his coat," and the speaker looked straight in front of him and proceeded doggedly. "It got broke in the accident, and as well it should. If he ever brings it again to this house, Mr Tom, I give you fair warning, sir——"

—“Why, it's nothing to me!” interpolated Tom, with secure audacity—he knew his father's precautions.

“Be it something to you or not, sir, I say it all the same. If Mr Cumberland, or any one else, brings them sort of hidden things to this house, they goes to Sir Thomas. My duty is my duty, and be it Mr Cumberland or any one else——”

“Of course, of course,” said Tom, quickly. “You see Marks knows what he is about, Flora; it was Miss Flora who set it agoing, Marks, and now, that is all she wanted to know. If I were you I should not speak

about it to Sir Thomas this time. There, that's all right; you may go now; it was Miss Flora who rang for you, not I."

"I believe you there, Mister," nodded the old man to himself as he descended the staircase. "I believe that last word o' yourn, as I don't most that you say. You've been catched, and made to own who brought it, and she's threatened him to tell, unless so be's I'm told. Ay, ay, Mr Cumberland, you're the next. Well, of all the folks for cleverness in getting drink, when drink he must have, that Tom Seaton beats them all!"

"Evidence is pretty strong, ain't it?" said Tom to his sister as soon as they were alone. "I did not want to let Cumberland down in the eyes of the servants, so that was why I was loath to send for Marks before—but you were quite right not to be satisfied without. Now, what sort of a husband do you think Madeline has selected for herself?"

## VIII.

## N E M E S I S.

“Revenge, which still we find  
The weakest frailty of a feeble mind.”

—DRYDEN.

“THAT Madeline should know, and should yet care for him, and go on caring for him, is the worst thing about it all, to my mind,” cried Flora, with all a woman’s pitiless judgment on another woman. “That Madeline should really encourage a man of intemperate habits—though how she had found it out, when none of us had, I cannot think; but that she has, I am convinced, and I think it *shocking*. However much I had begun to think of *any one*, if I had discovered *that*

about him—oh, papa must put a stop to it at once.”

“Not so fast, not so fast. Still you are quite right in the main ; we have got to act, and to act offhand, or we shall be in a fix before we know. It’s not so easy to accuse a man as you think. That was why I declined Cumberland’s company to-day ; I did not wish to meet him before something definite had been decided upon. Now I have a plan in my head. If it succeeds, Mr Cumberland will get his *congé* to-morrow, and then we shall have seen the last of him for ever and a day——”

“Oh, I can’t help being sorry,” murmured Flora.

“That’s a woman all over. You would have liked him for yourself, yet he likes Madeline ; you don’t think him fit to marry Madeline, yet you ‘can’t help being sorry’ to have done with him. What ninnies women are !” cried Tom, loftily. “Now look

at me. I have no grudge against Cumberland ; he has always been uncommonly gracious and condescending to me ; he has never slighted *me* for a rival—well, well, never mind about that—but, any way, I am to lose a friend, a companion, and a very good fellow, and I don't care a hang ! ”

“ The more shame to you,” said Flora, with spirit.

“ Not at all ; I am capable of rising above selfish considerations. I am anxious to save Madeline at any cost to myself. You don't believe me, I daresay ; I am not given to such fine feelings. Well, perhaps I should be sorry to lose Maddy then ; and I may be biassed so far ; but, any way, I don't want to see her made wretched for life. Any one can see—now that all our eyes have been opened, for we have been as blind as beetles before,—but now that we have struck the scent, we can see that she is infatuated with the fellow. All the more so, because she has

kept it dark till now. *She* may have seen him the worse, though none of *you* have; who's to tell? You saw how quiet she kept about that breakage yesterday, though I warrant her own clothes had betrayed something, even if she had not found it out from his. She would have him to-morrow—jump into his arms—drunkard or no drunkard. She was not a whit surprised at what happened in the car—not she. What followed? An hour or two afterwards she was whispering with him out there in the window, and letting him hang over her at tea-time; oh, and he got something from her, a flower or something, I could not see what, but——”

“Do be quiet about it; it is not pleasant to hear. What do you want me to do?”

“You are to stop the marriage.”

“How? I? How can I do anything?”

“You are to go to papa——”

“And tell him all?”

“And tell him nothing.”

It was one of Tom's tricks thus to deal in enigmas.

"If you can make him act upon 'nothing,' certainly I cannot," said Flora, pettishly. "If papa is to forbid Mr Cumberland the house, it will only be on learning the whole truth."

"And a nice scandal that would make; and a pretty hole we should be in to prove it. And what a hue and cry we should have after us all over the country ! My dear Flora, you have no knowledge of the world, none whatever ; I have—by instinct. My only means of getting it, I allow ; but any way it's there. Now listen,—you must be prepared to tell a fib or two for such a pious purpose : you must go to Sir Thomas, say that Madeline has deputed you to be her spokeswoman, that Cumberland's attentions have become too marked,—stop—I think you must say he has proposed to her——"

"*That* I shan't. He has done nothing of the kind."

“ You will have to *say* he has—what does it matter, that? The point is, you must get Sir Thomas to call at the Moor Farm tomorrow evening, on his way home from the pierhead, with Madeline’s distinct refusal. Cumberland will stare a little, naturally; that is of no consequence; my father must be very decided. He must assure Cumberland particularly—as you will assure him—that Madeline is quite resolved against seeing him again; and—and—oh, you know how to do it all, well enough.”

“ But it seems such a stupid plan.”

“ Never mind whether it is stupid or not; the circumstances are peculiar, and I cannot hit upon a better. I had another in my head yesterday, but it won’t work. On thinking it out, I have had to give it up. No, this must do. Cumberland will of course bluster, and swear, and demand an explanation, which our father, worthy gentleman, will be in no wise prepared to give. None the less will

he stick to his point that Cumberland's attentions are distasteful, and that he must request him to discontinue coming to the house ; and it will end in a quarrel in the most approved style. My father must be particularly impressed by the fact that Madeline does not wish ever to see him again—Cumberland will himself suspect why——”

“ But why should we not tell papa the truth, even though it should be expedient to keep it back from Mr Cumberland and Madeline ? ”

This was rather an awkward question for him.

In consequence, he redoubled his air of conviction. “ My dear girl, I can't explain if you don't see it for yourself. For one thing, can you, who know our father so well, imagine him for a moment, even for a single moment, and even for the best of purposes, stooping to dissemble ? No—he would bang out with the truth, the whole truth, and

nothing but the truth ; and there would be the devil to pay if he did, that's all. No, no ; I have all the worldly wisdom which my excellent parent lacks. My plan is quiet, noiseless annihilation. Cumberland crushed; Madeline saved ; the whole family and neighbourhood ignorant, and peace prevailing."

She was at length won upon to see with his eyes. She was not an ill-disposed girl ; under trying circumstances she could act, as we have seen, with generosity ; weak and vain as was her nature, there had been something almost noble in the manner of her giving up that to which a woman instinctively clings—a supposed conquest ; but now she began to waver. True, at the first suggestion of the task Tom proposed for her, she had started aside in horror ; but when all had passed as narrated above, and when it really seemed as if interference were needed, and she were the proper person to interfere—for Tom had skilfully represented that even

if his father would listen to him, it would not seem probable that he should have been chosen as Madeline's emissary — if then it had to be that the lovers must be parted, ought to be parted, had to be parted — it suited Flora Seaton's shallow nature infinitely better to go to her father supplied with a tissue of plausible falsehoods which should quietly undermine the enemy's arsenal, than to charge him with a bombshell of truth whose damage would be wrought with din and fury and terrific explosions.

“I suppose it is right,” she conceded, dubiously. “I am sure it must be right, because I dislike doing it so much. There really seems nothing else to be done. If Madeline had been ignorant of Mr Cumberland's propensities, I should certainly have thought we had only to tell her, and she would have had no more to say to him, but——”

“But as she already knows,” hinted Tom.

“As she already knows, we must act for her.”

“For the credit of the family,” pursued Tom, who had the art to perceive he must not appear too much disinterested. “It would be such a confounded disgrace to us all; and especially as we have taken Cumberland by the hand from the first, introduced him as it were everywhere, and no doubt had it said that it was to be a match between you—or Blanche—and him.”

It was enough. He had set every ill feeling at work; and fully persuaded that she was undertaking a righteous and necessary piece of diplomacy, Flora set off on her errand to Sir Thomas, stimulated by a parting suggestion from her brother, “This is the time he is always alone.”

Sir Thomas was not, however, alone. His voice was heard talking, as his daughter opened the door, and he was, furthermore, too much occupied with his subject and his auditor to observe her.

As that auditor, however, was merely Donald, the shepherd at the Moor Farm, and as her father could not be supposed to have anything to say to him which all the world might not hear, the young lady advanced without hesitation, and standing by the large library table in the middle of the room, awaited her turn.

She was not sorry, now that she was actually within the presence-chamber, as it were, to have a few minutes given her wherein to collect her thoughts and consider how she should open out her mission before her audience began.

Somewhat abruptly she was aroused from her abstraction.

“ You here, Flora ? ” exclaimed her father, turning all at once upon her, when some minutes had elapsed, as though he had only just become aware of her presence, and was, moreover, considerably disconcerted by it. “ You here ? And how long have you been in the

room? When did you enter? What right had you to listen?"

"Listen, papa!"

"It is really—really," proceeded Sir Thomas, with a look of great annoyance; "it is what I never expected from you, or any of you. In my own house, in my own room, to come creeping in like that!"

"Indeed there was no creeping about it," asserted the intruder, alike astonished and offended; for although the library was indubitably Sir Thomas's "own room" after a fashion, he had never been known to resent any one's going in or out before. "I certainly meant no harm," proceeded the young lady. "I knocked at the door, and when no one answered, I opened the door, and said, 'May I come in?' When I saw you were engaged,"—with a look that said plainly, "So very unimportantly engaged," — "I thought I had better wait till you were at liberty." Then aside, "How could I suppose,

papa, that you would object to my hearing anything you had to say to *Donald*?"

Sir Thomas hesitated. Certainly the picture of Donald as he now presented himself, an object of sheepish penitent guilt—a creature who, had he been one of his own colly dogs, would indubitably have had his tail between his cringing legs—was reassuring; but still he continued, though with less asperity—

"You know, my dear, I always expect to know when any one comes into this room."

"Especially when any other one in the room has been getting a wiggling," thought Miss Flora to herself. "But papa need not be so extra particular. That poor fellow must be accustomed to wiggings; he looks stupidity personified." Then louder, "I am sorry, papa, if I came too soon. Shall I go—and come back again? Have you anything more to say?"

"Did you hear what I said already?"

"No, papa."

“ Not a word ? ”

“ No, papa. I was not attending ; I was thinking of something else.”

“ Dear me ! What could it matter if I had heard a thousand times ! ” thought she ; but still she confined herself to the simple statement, being desirous of getting the thing over and proceeding to the real business on which she had come.

“ Humph ! Very well, my dear, then it’s all right,” said her father, at length. “ I do not approve of any of you being in the room when I have to speak to the men, that’s all. But—oh yes, you can remain now ; I have nothing more to say. There is nothing more to be said,” turning to the shepherd, who still quietly waited at the door. “ You have disobeyed my orders, and you know what that means. You are discharged on the spot. You will get a week’s wages from Mr Anderson, and may think yourself very well off to get that. You will not stay about the

place after this week. Now you may go," and the man departed.

On his way down-stairs he met Miss Madeline. He was going down, she was coming up; with due deference Donald stood aside to let the young lady pass.

She passed without bestowing a glance on him; could she but have seen that which he cast on her!

He knew to whom he owed his dismissal. He had learned from Sir Thomas that Miss Madeline, to whom he had intrusted the smuggled package, had been the one to inform him of its fate, and that, directly she understood its true nature; and as he had been assured over and over again, by those who had consigned it to him, that even if anything should miscarry *he* should not suffer—the usual faithless promise to the cat's-paw—he was now perfectly confounded and maddened to find himself caught in such a trap.

Indeed, none of those concerned had reckoned on Madeline's courage.

That she would have been frightened and wretched, and then cajoled and enthralled afresh, was what had been the general conclusion when the accident had been reported. Tom had swaggered so loudly of his sway over her, the others had beheld her so gentle, so shy, so soft—that the idea of *her* making mischief, and doing it in so direct and daring a fashion, had never been mooted.

So it was to this dainty lady that Donald owed his discharge ; and discharge to him meant the loss of a place that was always in request, of comfortable winter quarters, an excellent master, and an easy time. Nor was it probable that at the back end of the year, when the Hallowe'en term was just over, and farm-servants were all snugly engaged and settled for the winter, Donald would find another situation at all equal to that which he had wantonly flung away. There was no

blinking the fact that he had been a loser in the game he had been playing ; that he had forgotten the old saw about being off with the old love before being on with the new ; and that in his zeal to be “on” with the Sir Thomas *in posse*, he had fatally injured himself in the estimation of the Sir Thomas *in esse*.

All of this, in effect, if not in actual words, was quite intelligible to this guileless Gallo-way lad. He knew, none better, that more than one in his position had already been sent about his business on the same grounds ; and that of late, supervision had been stricter than ever, owing to a not unfounded suspicion on the part of the unhappy Sir Thomas that his principal and almost only confidant, the bland and dignified Marks, was mainly induced by motives of self-interest to co-operate with heartiness—and that, although cautious enough to have no actual hand in what went on, he could be both blind and

deaf, if either infirmity came in handy for the moment.

Marks, in truth, was not sanguine as to reformations. His own secret opinion of the cripple was that he was of no good, and never would be of any good in this world; in consequence, that the sooner he drank himself out of it—since drink he would—the better.

That all his master's anxious restrictions and precautions were useless, was the serving-man's honest belief; and although sincerely compassionating Sir Thomas's pains and trouble, and after a fashion trustworthy in his co-operation, the conviction that sooner or later all would be known, and the young heir hopelessly disgraced and ruined, prevented his making any very hearty endeavours for the prevention of such an end.

Donald had been shrewdly confident that he had had nothing to fear from Mr Marks. That Mr Marks hated a fuss in the house,

that he liked peace at all price, and that peace was only to be secured by Sir Thomas's being kept in ignorance and innocence of much that went on in the household, he was well aware. Of this fact one member of the household had not been slow in informing her sweetheart. He had thought of sending or giving the Sunday parcel to Jane, the housemaid—the same Jane who had charge of the invalid's fire, and who was constantly in and out with her bucket and dust-pan,—and Jane would have done his bidding promptly and securely; but it had been a pleasant thought of Tom's on Thursday evening to create a new and unconscious purveyor, in the shape of his cousin Madeline. He had not even taken deeply to heart the accident which had lost him his coveted possession, since it had brought her trouble and shame—he had still Jane to fall back upon, and he foresaw through Jane and Donald, both comparatively new-comers, a

constant source of supply in future ; but when it came out that Madeline, the little fiend, had actually fronted Sir Thomas, and informed him to his face of all, thus destroying every hope of a permanent arrangement —for, of course, Donald would be packed off at once, and without Donald Jane would be useless—when this was all clearly comprehended by Tom, the wildest schemes for his revenge were scarce wild enough for him. To deprive Madeline of her lover was but a part of them.

To return, however, to the discharged shepherd.

He was but a simple Galloway hind ; but it was not particularly simple Galloway language which broke in low, deep, guttural accents from his lips as he hurried from the Castle, afraid and ashamed to meet any one, and including illogically all who dwelt therein as his enemies and oppressors. A desire to do something, to do anything to be

“even” with Sir Thomas and his family—with those who had got him into the mess, and who were now leaving him to his fate, almost more than with the direct arbiter of that fate—was boiling furiously in his veins. Neither his master nor Marks were to him so much objects of hatred and fury as Tom, Madeline, Jane—those who had woven the net around him, which had now caught and tripped him up.

What had he cared for the lass Jane? There were bonnier and merrier to be had any day; but he had thought it was a grand thing to have doings with one of the Castle servants, and Jane had been kind and couthy, and had aye gammered and gammered and gotten round him, and the Greenock merchants had been civil, and he had been plied with tobacco and whisky for himself—and, in short, he had been befooled, and would have gone on gladly being befooled, if almost at the outset he had not been so

suddenly and rudely thurst from his paradise.

As he strode along over the bare wintry wilds which he was so soon to quit, a disgraced man, and which already began to seem strange and odious to him, muttered curses fell from his lips at intervals. What could he do ? Where should he go ? What should he reply to all the surprise and astonishment his sudden departure would create ? He would be questioned and cross-questioned : it would be,—“ Donald, man, is it true, this clash they’re tellin’ me ? ” and, “ Dear sakes, Donald, what’s wrang ? ” and, “ Are ye awa’ for a’thegither ? ” and, “ Wull ye no be comin’ back again ? ”

Instinctively—for he was by no means devoid of intelligence—he saw himself the target for curiosity and that sort of pitying wonder which is hardest of all to bear ; and as he brooded darkly over all that had happened, designs and desires which would have

been simply untenable if formed by any but such a one, took more and more firm possession of his rude, undisciplined, savage breast.

“Donald, is it you ?”

A neighbouring hind, with whom Sir Thomas’s shepherd was on terms of good-fellowship, suddenly appeared round a sharp angle of the road.

“Ay, it’s me,” replied Donald, with surly brevity. “Aweel ?”

“Eh, whatten’s wrang wi’ ye, man ?” cried his friend, struck by a reply so unlike the usual response a cordial greeting evokes, especially among solitudes. “What’s wrang wi’ ye the day ?” continued he ; “is’t the sheep—or the dowgs ? Whaur hae ye been ? Ye’re a’ yer lane ? Whaur’s Benjie, or the wee bow-wow ?”

“They’re at hame.”

“It’s no’ like you to leave them at hame. Ane wadna ken ye wi’oot your dowgs. Whaur

are ye gaun ? And whaur hae ye been ? ” he persisted, growing more and more inquisitive.

“ I’ve been at the Castle. I’m gaun to—the deil,” said Donald, with the same stern and gruff asperity. “ Haud awa’, man ; let’s pass. I hae nae mind for a crack the noo. Ye’ll hear sune eneuch.”

“ Hear ! What’ll I hear ? Losh me, Donald, I’m wae for ye ! There’s mair than sheep in this, I’m thinking. Wad ye no’ be the better o’ tellin’ a freen’ o’ yer trouble ? ” sticking to him as he walked on, and keeping pace. “ Man, ye’re no’ yersel’ ; ” then, with a sudden thought, “ is it a glass ye hae had, ye drucken loon ? ”

It was the spark to the flint.

“ Drucken loon ! ” roared the insulted hind, in a frenzy of rage—“ drucken loon ! Is’t me ye misca’ for a drucken loon, wi’ that ill-faured tongue o’ ye ? Keep yer drucken loons for them that deserves the name,—

there's mair i' the parish than fowks think ! Gif a puir man taks his tumbler, it's 'Oo, ye drucken loon !' but when it's a *gentleman*, it's 'Wha gied it him ? Whaur got he it ?' Gur—r—," with a prolonged growl, and a long, low muttering that supplied the place of further words.

His friend whistled.

"That's it, is it ?" he said, quietly. "Sae ye hae been at that business, hae ye ?" pointing backwards at the Castle. "The mair fule ye ! I micht hae kenned ; but wha wad hae thocht it o' ye ? Oo, it's a bad job, yon. Keep yer finger oot o' that pie, I wad recommend ye, Donald."

"Recommend—recommend !" cried Donald, fiercely. "Ye're ower late wi' yer fine recommendations. Keep them for the neist man ; maybe he'll profit by it."

"The neist man ! Sir Tammas has set ye aboot yer business, then ? That's it, is it ? Aweel, ye hae lost a guid place."

“Aweel, ye’re a guid freend, nae doot,” retorted Donald; “but gif that’s a’ ye hae to say, ye nicht ’s weel as no haud yer tongue. A guid place, quo’ he? There’s as guid places and maisters to be had—and bonnier hames forbye, for them ’s owns them,” he added, suddenly. “D’ye see it noo? D’ye see yon auld place noo?”—for a turn in the road had brought to view the old grey turreted tower, and it now appeared glistening in a lurid wintry sunset which filled the western horizon. “Look ye weel upon it—look ye weel,” continued the speaker, with rising excitement; “maybe ye’ll no’ hae it lang to look at. There’s fine fowks as weel as puir fowks has their hames ta’en frae them, and kenna whaur they hae to turn. Sir Tammas is weel set up the day; sae was I yesterday. ‘It’s Donald here, an’ it’s Donald there;’ and it’s ‘Jist tak’ care o’ this;’ and ‘Slip this alang wi’ ye;’ ‘There’s nae harm to onybody—it’s but a drappie to

a puir sick lad,' and that kin' of thing. But when onything gangs agley, it's 'Pack that fule, Donald, aboot his business.' 'Awa' wi' him ! Wha's he ? Let him gang to the wa'. Gie him a flea i' his lug!'"

"Whisht ! There's a man and horse ahint ye," whispered his companion, jogging his elbow.

The man was Cumberland's groom, who had only now returned to the Farm, having been sent elsewhere on his master's errands, and who, on seeing the two farm-servants in front, was putting his horse to the canter to overtake them.

"This is for you from the young gentleman at the Castle," said the groom, producing the slip of paper which Tom had despatched by the housemaid ; and handing it to the Moor Farm shepherd, "You should have got it before, but—"

"It's sune eneuch," scowled the recipient.

“Soon enough? Ha! Very glad, I’m sure. You are walking but slowly,” continued Cumberland’s civil Devonshire servant; “you know your own weather in these parts, no doubt; but I should say”—turning round in his saddle to look westward—“I should say the rain will be here directly. If I don’t get on——”

“Get on. Wha’s keeping ye?” muttered Donald, who was past endeavouring to keep up appearances. “I’m no’ seeking naebody’s company that I ken o’.”

“You’re not over civil, friend,” replied the horseman; “and since my company seems to give you no pleasure, I’ll wish you good day, and a better temper when next we meet.”

“An’, ’deed, I think I’ll do the same,” added the Scotchman. “I’ll gang my ways tae. But, hark ye, Donald, my man; ae word i’ yer lug. Haud a care, man—*haud*

*a care.* That bit paper's frae yer freend at the Castle, that I ken. Aweel, I'll gie ye my mind—that Tam Seaton's as verra an imp o' Satan as e'er has——”

“Were he Satan's sel',” interrupted Donald, savagely, “I wad do his biddin' this ance—and Satan's biddin' it is,” he added, between his teeth. “Ay, I'll do yer biddin' this ance, my man—this ance; and then I'll do my ain—my ain—my ain!” and as he spoke, a grim and dangerous smile settled down upon his coarse, weather-beaten face.

“Aweel, I'm awa',” said his friend, but paused as if still reluctant to go.

“Gang!” cried Donald—“gang!”

“Ye'll no' be ower wi' us the morn?” still anxious to probe if possible the wound.

“I'll no' be onywhere the morn.”

“Maybe we'll no' meet again, then?”

“We'll no' meet.”

“Are ye for awa' sae sune?”

"I'm for awa', ay; ne'er fash yersel' gif  
it's sune or late. I'm for awa'."

"He's fey,"<sup>1</sup> muttered the other to himself, as he strode off; "the man's fey."

<sup>1</sup> Excited in appearance or manner—supposed to be a presage of death.

## IX.

## THE STROKE.

"There is no small degree of malicious craft in fixing upon a season to give a mark of enmity or ill-will. A look which at one time would make no impression, at another, wounds the heart —like the shaft which flying with the wind pierces deep, which of its own natural force would scarcely have reached the object aimed at."—STERNE.

LADY SEATON and her daughters were to dine out on the following day.

Sir Thomas, full of his own concerns, had sent an apology, and had left early in the morning for Greenock, to return that same evening by the boat, and in accordance with his daughter's urgent demand, to look in at the Moor Farm on his way home.

It had not been without difficulty that this agreement had been obtained. A more un-

pleasant or ungracious task had never before been forced upon him, and his common-sense and his courtesy alike revolted at it. It was a piece of folly, and it was an ungentleman-like act. He liked Cumberland ; he saw in him just the suitable desirable husband a girl wanted ; and had it been one of his own girls—but Madeline, could he have borne to part with Madeline ? Unknown to himself, a strong secret power aided and abetted his daughter Flora on her embassy ; a reluctance to part with his niece, for which the poor baronet could hardly be blamed, made him less and less averse to carrying out her behest ; and it ended in this—that on receiving the solemn and repeated assurance that he would himself approve of Cumberland's dismissal, were Flora at liberty to tell him all—(the poor girl swam hopelessly about in a sea of falsehoods without seeing land anywhere, until this one truth, as truth she believed it to be, did at last appear to her) ; at length

poor Sir Thomas, only willing and anxious to do what was right, but with a little sigh of relief at his heart, and a feeling that once his interview with Cumberland were over, he would be eased of a load, assented to all that was asked of him. He hoped, trusted, believed he was acting honourably, and Madeline's fate was sealed as far as he was concerned.

"And you will be just a little kind to poor Maddy, to-night," said Tom's sister, coming into his room, dressed for the dinner-party. "You know, Tom, how she dreads these dreary autumn evenings; and to-night this high moaning wind——don't try to terrify her, as you sometimes do; don't begin about that stupid old story of the haunted room, and the footstep on the walk; but especially do have some sort of feeling, and let alone those hints and innuendoes about Mr Cumberland. It is bad enough, what we have had to do—there is no need to make it worse."

" You don't half like 'the situation,' I perceive!"

" I don't like it at all. Nothing would ever have induced me to go to papa, but for——"

" I know—I know. When do you say the boat is due? At seven?"

" It is due about half-past seven, but it is generally much later before it comes in. I have often seen its red light somewhere round the point of the bay when we are coming out from dinner, and sometimes even when I am going up to bed. It is very uncertain, and especially so at this time of year. Why, Tom—supposing it is too late for papa to go to the Farm?" she broke off, suddenly.

" He will go, whatever time the boat comes in," pronounced Tom; " there are some things which the men want, and which they must have; and if he is once there, he will certainly see Cumberland—Cumberland will

take care of that. Oh, I don't think you need be afraid ; I think it is all right."

"Well, I shall be glad when it is over," said she, with an uneasy shake of her pretty shoulders. "I am sure I feel quite miserable ; and I do hope there will not be any great to-do about it. I do hope Mr Cumberland will go off quietly ; it would be so very awkward meeting him. I declare I never thought to have been glad that he was not going to a party, but I am sure I am glad to-night ; I could not have faced him."

After a pause. "What a wretchedly dark disagreeable night it is ! It is always dark and disagreeable whenever the Maxtons ask us, and it is a good hour's drive each way. For any other people it would not matter half so much."

"It *is* a bad night," said Tom, with rather a strange look ; "I am glad it is, too. I like bad nights. Madeline doesn't. I must provide her with some amusement in conse-

quence. Ha! I have it. Yes, that will tempt her down. Oh, never you fear, we shall be lively enough, Maddy and I; we shall have lots going on, and be quite as festive as you, though we may not keep it up so late. The house will be quiet when you come home, so mind you go straight to your beds and make no disturbance. Now be off."

"Yes ; there is the carriage bell."

"Marks goes with you, doesn't he ?"

"To-night he does. He always goes whenever we dine at Heatherhill, you know. They like him to wait, as they are generally short of men-servants."

"I know—all right. I only wondered how you had got round the governor. I thought he never let Marks go anywhere."

"Well, mamma did not mention it, and as papa is himself away, there will be no questions asked," laughed Flora, who, as we know, went in with her mother's ways as to

doing things “quietly”—a favourite word of Lady Seaton’s. “Good-bye; they are calling me,” and away she flew.

“I have but to pull the string, and set them all working as I will,” chuckled Tom, to himself.

The carriage rolled away from the door, and for a full hour thereafter silence reigned within and without the Castle ; the silence at least of mankind and of animals ; for on the other hand the night settled in with fiercer and fiercer gusts of wind, interspersed with sharp occasional spatters of rain as a passing shower flew overhead,—and it seemed to Madeline, in her little chamber to which she had retreated in preference to the solitude of the large dismal drawing-room, that almost any sound except that of the droning weath-ercock and the whistling and sighing blast, would be welcome.

The sound of Tom’s voice alone she excepted.

So sinister had seemed his look, and so evil his smile ever since she had openly and fearlessly avowed her having exposed him to Sir Thomas, that she told herself over and over again that nothing should induce her to be alone with him, at any rate for the present,—at any rate until—until—oh, who could tell what a day might bring forth? No; hope whispered that deliverance was at hand, and Tom's thraldom at an end; she could hold out a little, but a little longer, and what though the night were wild and stormy—a tap at the door.

“No, no,” cried Madeline, clasping her hands upon her choking bosom; “no, I will not, I cannot—no, Tom, I *dare not go.*”

She had not, however, calculated on one sort of summons. A pencil line was handed in at the door, and it was to the effect: “Come down to see your friend. He is here.”

Her friend? *Her* friend? Could that

mean any one but Cumberland? Could Cumberland have been the one himself to dictate the message? Could Tom—oh yes, it must have been so. Tom must have been forced to send for his cousin, and to send for her in such terms as should bring her. He had divined that otherwise she would not come, and his pride had not suffered him to expose this to Cumberland, especially since he had boasted of his sway over Madeline on the last occasion of their all being together. And Cumberland had been unable longer to keep away from her; and had chosen as his time to come that wild night, when all the rest were absent; and when—and when—ah, what could she do but go to him? What could she fear when he was there? What feel but that he would be by her side?

More as a veil to hide the sudden joy upon her blushing face than for any other reason, she inquired, “There is a visitor with Mr Tom?” A visitor. It was the nearest ap-

proach she could make to the name she loved.

“ Yes, miss.” Jane was English, and said “ miss,” not “ ma’am.”

“ When did he come ? ”

“ A quarter of an hour ago, miss ; Mr Tom rang just now, and asked me to give you this,” continued the maid, “ and I have come straight up. Shall I take any message back ? ”

“ Say I will be down directly.”

But ere she could go, she must take a peep into her mirror, shake out her bonnie hair, slip a ribbon round her neck, and place a flower—a poor little flower, but one that for this had been treasured—in her bosom.

And then, with throbbing heart and shining eyes, and a step that stole almost noiselessly along, she crept through the long passages and up the little stair that led to Tom’s room.

A loud laugh from within assailed her

ears as she entered—a harsh, discordant, triumphant, terrible laugh.

She had come. He had caught her. His exultation was complete.

But who was that in the place that should have been filled by Cumberland? Who closed the door after her as Cumberland should have done? And who was it who was looking at her?—but no, not as Cumberland—Heaven forbid!—would ever have looked.

“Your friend!” cried Tom. “Ha, ha, ha! *Your friend*, my dear,” waving an introduction, as it were, with one mocking arm. “Not, perhaps, the friend you expected to see, but none the less—No, don’t think you are going to run away; nothing of the sort. Here is this honest fellow”—pointing to the sullen, hang-dog countenance of Donald, his father’s *quondam* shepherd, to whom it will have been already guessed he alluded,—“here he is, as faithful to me as ever, in

spite of you, and Sir Thomas, and all. Here he is, and here is his load"—pointing to two large bottles of brandy on the table, one of which had been already opened, and the empty glass at Tom's elbow showed what had become of a portion of its contents.

"Now, Madeline, I advise you to give in, and to do it with a good grace," continued Tom, with a hideous attempt at cajolery. "You have got to join us; to take your share—and to take it without any wry faces. If you go and tell afterwards, it will be the worse for you; but I don't think you will. No, my dear girl, I don't think you will. When you have had as much as I think good for you, you won't want to peach. Hola! we shall be a merry party! Sit down, and be thankful. I think it is uncommonly kind of us not to wish to keep all the good things to ourselves. Madeline, you little fool, you thought you could measure wits with me: you will be wiser in

future. Here's a fellow will do my bidding, in spite of all the fathers in Christendom. You shan't suffer, Donald, my man, I promise you. There, fill my glass, and now your own,—though it is a shame to waste such liquor on such a palate," he muttered aside. "But, however, drink's drink. Here's to you both"—tossing it off. "And now, Madeline."

Again that look he had twice before beheld.

"Oh, you won't, madam, won't you? So-ho! Oh, I had expected—fully expected—a little of this, my dear. Here, you, Donald, hold her, and pour—no, let me pour it down her throat."

The words had scarcely left his lips when, with a movement as swift as it was sudden, she had sprung aside, had darted in horror to the door. But it was of no avail. One arm was already in Donald's brutal and vengeful grasp, the next moment he had

laid on her the other ; and in his hands all her strength—such strength as so frail and tender a thing possessed—seemed all at once turned to feebleness.

“ Now give me the glass,” cried Tom.

“ Can ye no’ tak’ it for yersel’ ? ” demanded Donald, rudely.

“ Would I ask you if I could, you booby ? Here, one hand will do for her—your little finger would be enough ; she can’t get away.”

No, she could not get away ; but the next moment a clang, a crash, and a smash of broken glass rang through the apartment, the floor was covered with the wreckage of the bottles and tumblers, and dark-yellow streams flowed away to the further corners of the room.

“ You confounded fool ! ” roared Tom, addressing the stupefied hind, who, stock-still, attempted no rescue ; “ save it ! save it ! —save *some* of it ! Oh, you oaf ! you block-head ! you idiot ! ”—epithets and impreca-

tions rushing in a torrent from his lips. “Oh, it’s gone—it’s gone!” and in an agony of infuriated and impotent rage, the miserable wretch sank back upon his couch, shedding tears of disappointment.

Not one tea-spoonful was gathered up; it might have almost seemed as if no one wished to gather it.

“What’s yer wull noo?” It was the sullen, wrathful voice of the shepherd which first broke the silence that followed—that silence during which Madeline had thanked God in her heart. To all the passion of invective which had—certainly with injustice—fallen on his head, no syllable had been returned by Donald. Trained in habits of respect from infancy, even now—even with dark thoughts and a fell purpose burning in his soul—he knew not how to give vent in speech to his sense of injury and wrong. But it may be well imagined that none the less did the fire within his breast receive

additional fuel from the fresh mortification heaped upon it at this time, and that every word uttered by Tom in his folly was an additional stab to an already maddened heart.

“What’s yer wull noo?” was, however, all he said.

No answer.

“Am I to haud her yet?”

Still no answer.

“Wull I——”

“Ah, be quiet, can’t you?” snarled the cripple, who had now risen to his elbow, the most he could ever do unaided; “be quiet, you d——d idiot—you have done mischief enough already with your infernal stupidity; I didn’t say to unloose her, confound you! Do what you are bid, and that’s all *you* are wanted for,” with a contempt as unconcealed as it was insolent. “Now, look here, Madeline,” to his cousin, who stood quivering like a dove in the falcon’s clutch; “look here—I have had

enough of this. Once, twice, thrice—this is the third time you, *you*, a strip of a girl, a poor bit of a thing that my father took out of charity, and fed and clothed, and gave a shelter to—that you have presumed to—to dare,—pah ! I'll soon settle you. Donald, I told you the place. It's up through this staircase ; there's only one door, and see that you lock it well behind you, and bring me the key. You are going to spend the night there, miss," to her ; " you have often wished to spend a night in the haunted room, haven't you ? You could not have a better night than this. All the old wainscoting will rattle like furies, and the ghost's tread on the outside wall is always heard on a windy night. You will be glad to hear it—it's the only tread you will hear. Not a sound from within will reach you, once you are safely housed, and Donald shall see that you are safe enough. You did him a nice turn the other day, and he owes you

one. Away with her, Donald! but no—stop," putting his hand to his head; "I had nearly forgotten," he murmured; "shall I tell her, or not?" For a few seconds he debated; he had not meant to reveal that other matter in which Madeline had been plotted against; he knew—even now, with the fumes of the brandy he had already drunk mounting to his head—he knew it was imprudent to be communicative; but the temptation was too great. "Curse her," he thought, "she shall know the whole, and the devil take the result."

He looked up, and a smile of derision overspread his face.

"You will want something to think about, won't you, my pretty lady? Well, you shall have it, and then, I think, everything will be complete. Who did you suppose you would find here just now? Cumberland. Who would have been here, too, if he could? Cumberland. Who has been dangling after you and making a fool of you for the last

three months, and who conspired with you to hoodwink me and go and blab to my father on Sunday? Cumberland again. Now, will you go and tell Cumberland this? Will you fly to him with your story, and pour out your wrongs into his pitying ear? No, you don't—not if I know it. You have seen the last of Mr Frank Cumberland, I can tell you, Miss Madeline Seaton. You won't put on any more brooches and ribbons for him. At this very moment your kind, excellent, trustworthy guardian, instigated—although he does not know it—by me, is informing your fine lover from you—ay, I thought your eyes would open—from you, that his attentions are distasteful, that they must be discontinued, and, in short, that he must go to the right-about. I swore to be revenged on you, my girl, and I meant it. You can't do anything, we have managed it all so neatly for you. Sir Thomas is at the Moor Farm by this time, acting as your mouth-

piece, and, by your express desire, begging Mr Cumberland not to come here again. My father thinks he has to deal with an avowed suitor, Madeline. *We* know he has not ;” here he looked sharply at her, but alas ! he knew too truly—“ and therein lies the cream of the whole ; Cumberland will be so amazed at finding himself in such a position that he will hardly know which way to look, and he can scarcely say to Sir Thomas, ‘ Your niece has been a shade premature,’ whatever he may think. He will say so to himself, won’t he ? He will shield your indiscretion, but what will he think of *you* ? That he had never before met with so free and easy a damsel. That he had thought you so coy, so simple, so delicate—and that he finds you are as practical as the rest of your sex. That you have had enough of him, and are keen now to cry off. And there is an early boat to-morrow, Madeline. If I am not mistaken in Cumberland, he will pack his traps to—

night—within the hour—and hurrah for the sunny south at dawn of day! He won't break his heart, don't you think it. He'll console himself—

“‘ There are maidens in Scotland (or in England), more lovely by far,  
That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar.’

“ Yes, to-morrow, my girl, sees the collapse of all. If he don't go, you'll be none the better either, for we have all set our faces against the match, and it's not to be, whatever happens. So now you know what to expect, and——take her away, you fool,” to his other auditor; “ she's not dead—she's only shamming. Take her quick.”

Even he had had enough of the sight.

The cold, cruel air of the unused turret brought back consciousness to the hapless Madeline sooner than any other restorative could have done.

She rose from the couch on which she had been thrown, and looked about her.

Was it a dream, those hideous words, that awful scene? What did it mean? What had happened? Where was she? What had come to her?

She put her hand to her eyes. She gazed blankly around.

Then all at once the full horrors of the moment burst upon her beclouded brain, and covering her face with her hands, she sank down upon the floor with a cry of such agony as is only wrung from the last drops of the bitter cup.

Ay, there remained no more to be drunk—she had drained it to the lees.

It was true what Tom, with that diabolical insight into human nature which he possessed, had by this time discovered—namely, that in her deepest depths of trial and suffering lately, the thought of Cumberland had been a cordial such as nothing else in this world could have afforded. Of a higher consolation and support Tom knew nothing;

but he had penetrated into this, into the still deeps of the maiden's modest love. An exquisite sense of Cumberland's sympathy had upheld her in her chiefest hour of need; and even as she had stood in the hands of her tormentors during the last vile and degrading scene, there had been a secret whisper in her heart that there was one not far off who would more than make her amends for it all.

So sure had she been of Cumberland's love and of his truth, that with him, as before hinted, a way of escape had seemed to open from all her present misery. Would he not bear her away far from that desolate region with all its horrible associations? Might she not learn with him to forget, to blot out of all remembrance those days of horror and disgust? Sheltered by a husband's tenderness, rejoicing in his love, oh what hours, days, weeks, and years of happiness had seemed to open out before her!

The golden chalice had already touched her lips ; she had already tasted, and all life had been sweeter for that sip ; and now, instead of the cup of joy, the draught of anguish—instead of fair visions, a frantic nightmare.

The hooting owl came and went from the window-ledge, and Madeline heeded it not. The window-frames and the tattered hangings on the wall shook and shivered, but she neither saw nor heard. The wintry blasts gathered in strength and frequency, but she knew not they were there. One thought, one great despair filled her soul—no room was left for lesser agonies.

Well had the striker known how to strike ; and with fatal accuracy had he chosen how, when, and where to plant the knife.

It was not the downfall of her dearest hopes, it was not even the loss of her lover, that most keenly affected the unhappy Madeline. What made her shrink, and wince,

and writhe in spasms of shame too deep for words, but which found vent ever and anon in the short, sharp sob and the deep shivering breath, was the picture of what Cumberland must think of her.

A bolder, prouder spirit might, even beneath such a weight, have sustained itself by a sense of innocence ; one more versed in the world's wisdom and ways would have foreseen certain failure in a scheme so preposterous ; but Madeline—ah ! Tom had judged Madeline too well.

He had nearly killed her.

## X.

## THE FLIGHT.

“ His presence shield the maiden’s soul !  
 The gloom now dark and darker hung ;  
 With wild continuous fearful howl,  
 Each glen and cliff and cavern rung.

Her lovely face she strove to hide,  
 It was as angel’s mild and fair ;  
 For deaf and blind to all beside,  
 She thought of one who was not there.”

—TELFER.

How, when, and by what means a new recollection, carrying with it new life, darted into the mind of the unfortunate Madeline, she could never afterwards recall.

It was this, that the steamboat by which her uncle was to return was not infrequently detained far behind its time—indeed, that it was often well into the night before it reached the pier ; and although Tom had

spoken so confidently of his father's being already at the Moor Farm, he had no means of knowing that it was so. That the red light of the boat, of which it will be remembered Flora had spoken as being visible from some of their windows—that it had not passed before Madeline had been summoned by her cousin, she was certain, for she had herself been on the watch for it, eager to have Sir Thomas back ; that it might not have passed whilst she was in Tom's room was quite within the limits of possibility ; and if so, and if she could only reach her uncle before he saw Cumberland—she sprang to her feet.

Something might yet be done.

Her watch, by good luck, was at her side, and the moon, now full, streamed at the moment into the room during a brief interval of clearness overhead ; it was only eight o'clock : there was—there might be—there must be, time yet.

It was needless to try the door. Even if

the rusty key had not been too well forced in and ground round by the rough hands that bore her there, the only exit from that winding stair outside was through Tom's room. She shuddered afresh at the thought, and remembering how short the stair was, almost blessed the bolts and bars that separated her from thence ; but there was the window. Now, to Madeline's foolish fancy, it had ever been one of the horrors of this desolate apartment that the large casement, in its tall, thin pointed frame, opened out upon a ledge, from which ran downward an ivy-covered battlemented wall, on which the owls were wont to sit and snore in the dusk, and by which—so the legend ran—the murderer had escaped, who in that grisly chamber had perpetrated the deed which had for ever after associated it with his name. His flying step, it was said, was still nightly to be heard.

There was an accessibility and approach-

ableness about the room from without, as well as from within, which in connection with the fact that it seldom was approached and never made use of, seemed to put the stamp of truth after a fashion upon the ugly tale, and to say, as it were—"If there were nothing in the story, and if this ghostly haunt were never now frequented, why is it avoided by one and all? Why is the room not as other rooms? Why is it shunned and deserted, when in itself it is both convenient and easy of access?"

Thus had Madeline argued, with the nervous imaginations of a sensitive and timid nature; and so well aware was her jailer of her feeling on the subject, that if the bare idea of her escaping by the sloping wall had ever presented itself to his mind, he would have rejected it as needing infinitely more courage on the part of the captive than it required to remain where she was.

Yet it was to this haunted walk, ever be-

fore to her an object of aversion and foolish terror, that Madeline's thoughts now turned with a bound of reviving hope. She flew to the window without a thought of owls, ghosts, or murderers—all on much of a level in her mental category—and wrenching open the stiff, creaking fastenings, passed breathlessly out, with eyes that scarcely dared to trust their own vision.

Yes, she had not been mistaken—she had not overestimated the ease with which the ascent or descent might be made by any one so minded. The wall was high, but it was broad and strong; the ivy, in immense masses, covered and re-covered it, long trails and branches hung over, stout enough for any one to cling to, and in spite of the uncertain light and fitful gusts, there was no real danger in the passage.

Scarcely did the fugitive heed whether there were or not.

To let herself down from the window,

crawl along the ledge, slide from point to point and corner to corner, with one hand over the other and eyes bent only on the nearest—to halt till a passing blast had whirled away, and then clutch again the rough grey masonry and dark waving bush, and so on and on till the last long leap brought her in safety to the ground,—all was but the work of a few minutes, in which every minute seemed an age.

Not a second did Madeline now delay. Away upon the wings of the wind between the tossing trees of the avenue, through the open gate which had been so left to readmit the carriage without disturbance of the lodge occupants, and along the shore—not over the moor, for the pierhead lay in the opposite direction to the church—along by the broken rocky bay, over which the breakers thundered, she sped like a wild creature.

Where were her fears? Where were the creeping, nervous terrors that would have

beset the young girl out alone at that hour from any other cause? What gave her poor trembling feet, ill shod for such a journey, the strength to hurry over the rough stony way at so fierce a rate? All terror, all weakness was swallowed up in one thought—no room was left for any other.

Round the promontory now—and now a bridge, a marsh, and next a wood, and—what? What was that?

It was the sound of wheels rapidly approaching. Oh, what a sound to hear! Could wheels mean anything but that one thing she dreaded? Could any other vehicle but that which had gone to meet Sir Thomas be coming along at this time? And if Sir Thomas it proved to be—she had not yet passed the Moor Farm, or rather the road which turned off towards it—if this carriage, cart, or gig, or whatever it was, brought in it her uncle, Cumberland must have been met, and nothing could ever fully undo that meeting.

Cold and sick she crept behind a rock, and the chaise rattled past. It was not one belonging to the Castle.

Then on again, Madeline. Courage ! there are still no signs of the coming boat, no more gigs or carts which might mean arrivals by it, and no foot-passengers at all.

And now the top of the hill is reached, and the pierhead with all its twinkling, fluctuating lights stretches away at her feet ; she is but a quarter of a mile above it, the road is easy and straight before her, and, joy of joys ! there is no red lamp at the quay.

The fugitive might now have checked her pace, but too much confused and excited to reason calmly, she paused not to consider that whatever now befell she could not be too late, since the boat could be seen for several miles before it put in to the pier. Thinking not of this, Madeline sped down the slope as swiftly as before and only drew up

to a walk as she reached the outskirts of the little village. A glow of triumph warmed her panting bosom, a sigh of thanksgiving burst from her lips—she had mastered her fate.

Turning up the skirt of her dress over her head in Scottish fashion, Sir Thomas Seaton's beautiful and well-known niece was able to shroud from view the features which would, if seen, have inevitably betrayed her. And as her object now was principally to avoid observation, she rejoiced in the dark home-spun morning dress which so completely metamorphosed her when thus adjusted: two hours before, it had vexed her that she should have had on her plainest and least becoming gown when summoned, as she had thought, to receive Cumberland.

The dogcart in waiting for Sir Thomas was a fresh ground of consolation to Madeline. There it was, and there it evidently would remain until the boat arrived. Her first im-

pulse was to seat herself within it, and explain to the groom that an important message for her uncle had necessitated her coming there to deliver it in person.

But the oddness of her being there all by herself, of her having come all that dark and lonely way on foot, of her being hatless and cloakless, and, if any one chose to perceive it, bootless into the bargain, deterred her. An explanation which when thus made might not improbably, nay, would certainly give rise to remark and country talk, would pass muster without suspicion if given under Sir Thomas's own wing. To him she could tell everything; yes, in her present mood, to pour into his ear her tale, to seek his sympathy and protection, would be comfort and relief unspeakable—and those who saw them thus engaged might draw what conclusions they chose; they could not be unfavourable; or, at any rate, gossips' tongues could but wonder, and wonder would soon die out.

She was safe, she was in time, she was happy.

Nevertheless, it was not without many a sigh of weary longing, and many a qualm of natural repugnance, that the high-born and high-bred maiden mingled unknown and unnoticed in the little crowd that by degrees collected on the pier as the time drew nearer and nearer when the boat must arrive. Fishermen, farm-servants, and idlers of all sorts were lounging, smoking, telling stories, and passing the news of the country-side from one to another; she could not avoid hearing the coarse wit, the loud, rude laugh, the oath, the jest,—until at last, one more curious than the rest sauntered towards herself, and addressing her, not uncivilly, but in the familiar accents fit for a country lass, observed, “What brings ye here, hinny? Are ye for the boat?”

Fearful of betrayal, and still keeping her face closely covered, the frightened girl mur-

mured she knew not what; on which her new friend, stimulated perchance by such unwonted coyness, proceeded, “Ay, ye’re high and michty, are ye? Aweel, it’s nane o’ my business; but gif ye’re for the boat, my lass——”

“ Will she be late ? ” cried Madeline, eagerly. Her voice was enough.

“ Wull she be late ? Ay, she’ll be late. But whae are ye ? ” demanded the fisherman, stepping nearer and peering through the gloom. “ Thon’s no’ the tongue o’ a Gallowa’ lass—— Lordsake ! ” falling back with a gasp. “ Miss Madeline frae the Castle ! Sir Tammas’s dochter—na, his niece ; but it’s a’ ane. Oo, Miss Madeline, this is no’ the place for a leddy like you to be waiting her lane. And the dogcart is gane to the inn ; and Sir Tammas wullna be here till whae kens ? The boat’s no’ at Kerriesmuir yet. Oo, ye mun gang to the inn, Miss Madeline ; it’s but a bit o’ a place, but it’s daacent ; an’ ye ken

Mistress M'Killop, her whae keeps it ; an' it's a hantle better than stannin' here i' the cauld. Maister Cummerland's there——”

Madeline, who had begun to acquiesce—for, indeed, only her dread of Dame M'Killop's long tongue had kept her from taking refuge at the inn before—stopped short at the mention of Cumberland's name.

The very next moment she heard Cumberland's voice.

“I'm waiting for Sir Thomas ; he was going to call on me to-night, and as it grew so late without the boat's appearing, I have come here to save him the trouble. The boat not in sight yet, eh ?”

He was close behind the quaking little figure wrapped in her grey shroud, as he spoke.

With a hasty desire for concealment, she stepped aside to avoid the meeting which must otherwise have taken place—stepped a pace backward, not perceiving how near the

edge she stood already, and seemed to drop into the sea which washed the posts beneath.

A much less evil had in reality happened. She had merely fallen on to the side slip, a portion of the quay used for small boats, and at the place where Madeline stumbled over, not above two feet beneath the higher level.

Two feet, however, as every one knows, is quite sufficient to make a very ugly step, especially when unexpected; and unluckily there was a large iron ring among the wet masses of sea-weed, which would otherwise have formed a soft and springy cushion. For a few seconds the acute pain of a bruise prevented Madeline's moving, and her lying still was interpreted by those who saw the fall—and who in their own case would have got up rubbing themselves, and laughing at the mischance—to mean more than it did.

“That lassie's hurt.” “Are ye muckle the waur, hinny?” passed from lip to lip, as several peeped over, and one or two even

heavily essayed to lumber down and “gie a han’ up”; but one voice only reached Cumberland’s ears, as one among the group pressed forward with infinitely more solicitude than any of the rest, “Gude guide us, it’s Miss Madeline !”

“ *Who?* ” exclaimed Cumberland, thunderstruck.

“ Miss Madeline—Miss Madeline,” said the man, hastily passing him. “ Hey, gae back wi’ ye,” to the others. “ Amn’t I tellin’ ye it’s Miss Madeline frae the Castle, whae’s waiting on Sir Tammas——”

Cumberland stayed to hear no more. “ Stand back, my men,” he said, in a tone of authority; “ stand back, all of you—I will take care of Miss Seaton ;” and to himself he added, “ And who but I should ? ”

Great, however, was his silent astonishment on raising from her wet and slippery bed the trembling form of Madeline, to perceive that she was in no fitting guise for

such an expedition. The bare head, from which the protecting skirt had now fluttered down, the gloveless hands, the lack of shawl, cloak, of anything warm, snug, suitable—anything, in short, to show that her being there had been prepared for and pre-meditated,—all of this, which had been half hidden from, and altogether lost on Madeline's first discoverer, was instantly manifest to Cumberland.

It all meant something, and yet more was revealed by the distress, the vexation, and shame which he read in the countenance he loved, and which for some minutes sealed her lips.

“Good heavens! what has happened?” he whispered. “Never mind,” pressing her hand—“never mind answering. I did not mean to pry, to inquire—I would not distress you for the world. Lean on me,” drawing the hand he held within his arm; “you are hurt, and frightened——”

“I am not hurt—much,” responded she, faintly. Indeed, now that the first smart had passed, she hardly knew she was hurt at all. “I——,” but on attempting to move, an exclamation escaped.

“You *are* hurt! You fell on the stone—or on the iron ring,” cried Cumberland. “Is it—where is it?”

“It is nothing—indeed it is nothing. I think I have bruised myself a little, here and there. If I could just sit down for a moment”—and she looked towards the stone ledge at her side.

“Yes, sit down by all means,” said Cumberland, readily. “We will sit down here, and you will soon be better.” Then lower, “How you tremble! Are you not—are you cold?”

She shook her head.

“But you have neither bonnet nor shawl. What shall I look for? They came off when you fell, I suppose; I shall find them among the sea-weed,” as this idea occurred to him.

“No; I don’t—I don’t think you will,” stammered poor Madeline, with harmless guile. “Pray, don’t mind. Pray, don’t trouble yourself.”

“I have only to strike a light,” replied her companion, smiling down upon her, and beginning to clap his pockets and feel in search of the inevitable match-box. “Here’s my pipe; the matches can’t be far off.”

“Oh, don’t; it is of no use. I did not mean, that is to say, there is nothing to look for, there is nothing there.”

“Nothing there! Oh, that alters the question,” said the young man, stopping short, and looking his interrogations.

“I was hurried. I came away without anything. Oh, don’t ask!” Even in the darkness, she felt her cheek crimson at the avowal, “I came alone, and——”

“Alone!”

“To meet my uncle.”

“He expects you?”

She was silent.

“It is curious that I, too, am waiting for Sir Thomas,” said Cumberland, as if any point they two had in common was curious (and delightful). “Can I be of any service? At least, you will let me take charge of you till I deliver you up to the one who has a greater right——” he paused a moment, and then, leaning over still nearer to her, added deliberately, “*at present*. The day may come, when——” both hearts were beating fast.

“Please to move,” said a voice close to their ears. “There’s a barry coming here for the slip.”

Inhuman wretch, at such a moment!

Silently they had to rise, to stand, to let the detestable barrow go by: then to resume their seats they had turned, when another hail from behind, in another voice, afresh demanded attention. “There’ll be an even-

doon-poor i' a meenute; are ye gaun to sit here an' get drookit?"

"It will be nothing," cried Cumberland, with a wish that was father to the thought. "The wind is still too high for rain" (in spite of which, heavy drops were falling). "Shelter behind me," to his companion; "these will pass over directly. I, too, am waiting to see your guardian on my own account, Madeline; and I think you know, I think you guess, what it is I have to ask him. Let me have you on my side. Let me say you bid me——"

"Aweel, it's drookit through an' through ye'll get, an' there's a blatter comed on ower yonder that'll be here this verra meenute," croaked their unwelcome monitor. "A'body's gane but yersel's."

"And *you*, you pestilence!" ejaculated the outraged Cumberland, who at that moment cared not for hail or thunder on his own account, but who was perforce obliged to

realise that the previous droppings were changing to a pelting shower, before which even a love-tale must give way. "I suppose we must go for shelter," he conceded, reluctantly.

Happily the bruises sustained by Madeline were slight; and though there would probably be more to show for them on the next day, she was scarcely conscious of anything amiss as she was now hurried by Cumberland up to the little inn which was already full, and over-full, and into which the two late comers could scarcely penetrate through the groups of burly fishermen and sailors who blocked up the doorway.

Inside, matters were still worse, numbers of women and children having been also accommodated; and the inn parlour as well as the kitchen was crammed, hot and reeking with the steam from damp garments, smoke, and whisky.

"What a place to bring you to!" ex-

claimed Cumberland. “It is impossible for you to remain here. There must be somewhere else. Here, my good woman—hey, Mrs M’Killop ! where can you find a place for Miss Seaton to sit ? She can’t sit in here with all these people, you know ; and there has been some mistake about her coming—she has no outdoor things on ; there must be *some room*,” and he looked round impatiently.

“ ’Deed, then, Maister Cummerland, there’s no’. And it’s just the women - folks, puir bodies, that’s in here, and Miss Madeline kens some o’ them. There’s Mrs Cowan and her bairn——”

—“This is nonsense. This is not the time for the young ladies to be visiting their cottage people,” retorted Cumberland, haughtily. “Do you suppose Sir Thomas would choose that one of his family should be found in that——” happily he checked the word “den” before the dame’s ears had been assailed by

it ; and recollecting that it was expedient to adopt a more conciliatory tone if he wished to attain the object he had in view, resumed more mildly, “ Come, my good woman, see what you can do ; there must be some decent room up-stairs.”

“ Aweel, I’ll tell ye the truth, Maister Cummerland, there’s rooms, nae doot—leastwise there’s ae room ; and we did put a match till the fire, but the wun’s that high, the reek just filled the hail place.”

“ Can’t you open the window ? ”

“ Na, then, that’s just what we canna, for the cord’s broke ; and see, its coming this way,” as a column of smoke poured down the narrow entry. “ E’en let it come, that’ll be best,” concluded the dame, resignedly ; “ let reek alane for finnin’ a way oot for itsel’. Step in by, an’ it’ll no’ be lang ; but gif ye stand here i’ the draught——”

“ Yes, indeed, you will be chilled through,” said Cumberland, tenderly bending over his

charge. “ Well, if we must, we must ; ” and with a worse grace than he had ever before shown towards so trifling a condescension—for in general he was ready enough to submit to all that turned up, and to make himself at home under any circumstances—he steered a way to the seat by the fire, which had been politely vacated on their entrance ; and having ensconced Madeline therein, sat himself down on the old worn-out horse-hair settle by her side. The next minute he inquired suddenly, “ Has any one a plaid ? ”

It was as if he had asked, has any one a pipe ? Out of those produced from every side, one was selected, soft and warm, and drawn around the little form that from a variety of emotions, less than from cold or chill, even in that atmosphere, shivered. “ The young lady is not very well,” continued Cumberland, more graciously addressing the assemblage ; “ and she is getting nervous about Sir Thomas——”

“Oo, there’s nae need—nae need !”

“So I tell her, but she is—is still anxious.”

He saw that she was crying. He must exert himself at once on her behalf; and accordingly, suggestions, inquiries, and easy conversation, which fixed all the attention of his auditors on himself, threw an air of natural and proper concern over what was only too apparent, and which must otherwise have given rise to vulgar whispers and surmises.

But underneath the soft folds of the plaid there was another language spoken.

What to Madeline was delay, discomfort, distress, all the ache and weariness in her limbs, all the strangeness of her surroundings, all that she had undergone, and even all that she might yet have to undergo, when her hand lay in a lover’s clasp that every moment told its own tale ?

She would not, if she could, have freed herself.

Tears might flow, her bosom might

heave, her veins might throb, as ever more and more she realised what had come to pass—but what of that? In his eye she read no doubts, no suspicion, no misgiving, no withdrawal; in his tones she heard nothing but the care, the love, the anxiety, the uniting her with himself, the joining of their interests, the union of their wishes which ought to have been there—and his hand spoke the rest.

Even the obtuse wits around seemed to feel there was a solemnity stealing over the little room which awed and restrained them. Several had already risen and gone out, when on a sudden there was heard outside the welcome announcement, “The boat’s in sicht. She’ll be here the noo. She’s at Kerriesmuir;” and one and all, as though eager to be free, poured out into the darkness beyond.

“At last!” cried Cumberland; “*at last!* Oh, my darling—my darling—*mine at last!*”

He never asked her, ay or no. He said afterwards he had never thought about it.

“ And now I know all,” said Cumberland, presently. “ You would not keep anything back from me now, Madeline, and never, never again will you ; you are mine and I am yours for ever. Oh, my darling, I shall take such care of you. Oh, to think what you have had to bear, and I never to guess it, never to dream of it till two days ago—and even then how little did I imagine ! But we won’t talk of it. You would not even now have told me had I not made you my own and claimed it as a right. Brave, true, noble girl ! I have loved you from the first, Madeline ; now I honour you. I shall look up to you to lead me to be a better man. You shall make me worthier of yourself.”

Then again it was, “ But with it all, my little foolish one, why—why—why did you not speak out sooner ? If you had but told

your uncle—and yet how I worship you for not telling! I scold you for the very thing that makes me proudest of my darling—her courage, her fortitude, and her endurance. That it should have been displayed in such a cause is what I cannot get over—cannot yet quite get over. You say it has been going on for months? Ah, well, it is at an end at last; to-morrow, if all goes well—and I think it ought to go well now—to-morrow sees me installed at the Castle as your future husband, and as such I shall take precious good care that you are not much out of my sight, and not *once* out of my sight in the presence of that——” he checked himself: then subjoined contemptuously, “ Poor, imbecile creature! to think that I should have been taken in by that coarse, flimsy, absurd contrivance! As if I could ever have credited you, my pure, sweet dove, with behaviour so gross and ridiculous——”

“ Oh, I am sorry I told you.”

“ You would not have told me if you could have helped it,” responded Cumberland, joyously ; “ you had got to give an account of yourself once you had given me the right to demand it.”

“ But my uncle ? ” murmured Madeline.

“ Sir Thomas ? Well, it was strange ; but he is so engrossed, no doubt, with his trouble,—of course I understand, and am more sorry for him than I can tell—but it is not to be expected that he should be a good judge about such trifling matters as girls and their sweethearts,” said Cumberland, smiling. “ And now that you mention him, where, I wonder, is he ? The boat may be in, must have been in some minutes, if not more. We have been so taken up with ourselves—this little room has not been a bad place after all, Madeline ; but really I must go and hunt up your uncle now. What is that they are saying ? Something about the Castle ? Did you hear ? ”

## XI.

## IN THE COTTAGE.

“Hath he wronged thee? Forgive; for 'tis sweet to stammer  
one letter  
Of th' Eternal's language.”

—TEGNER, translated by LONGFELLOW.

“THE Castle's on fire! Castle Seaton's on fire! It's bleezin' a' ower! It's a' in a lowe! It'll burn to the grund i' a wund like this!” Such and suchlike rapid ejaculations were being passed on from one to another as Cumberland and Madeline emerged from the inn.

The rain had ceased, the night was clear and fine, but the high tidal wind had increased almost to a gale, and the steamboat

lay rocking at the quay, her captain having decided to wait until the storm had abated before proceeding further.

“Where is Sir Thomas?” demanded Cumberland, instantly.

“Sir Tammas? Whaur suld he be? He’s awa’ to see his ain fireside bleezin’! Puir gentleman! he’ll no’ need gang that saftly neither, or it may chance he fin’s but the black wa’s! Hae ye no’ heerd, Maister Cumberland? hae ye no’ heerd? Losh me! they hae cried it lood eneuch. The Castle’s on fire. It’s been burning this hoor back, it——”

“I hear—I hear. We must go up at once,” to Madeline. “No doubt your uncle is in the stable-yard.”

“That is he no’. Amn’t I tellin’ ye he’s awa’ till his ain hame? He——”

“Gone!” exclaimed Cumberland, standing still.

“Gane a while ago. Went straicht awa’

frae the boat. The folks had just comed wi' the news whan the boat cam' in."

"Gone!" repeated Cumberland. "How have we missed him? How did we not hear him pass?"

"Ye were ower muckle engaged, maybe,"—the fisherman looked at him slily; "an' they comed na this gait."

"We ought to have been told," said Cumberland, vexed on Madeline's account. He bit his lip as he looked at her, considering what was to be done.

"It was my fault," he murmured. "I ought to have been more on the alert; but—" Then he fell a-musing.

"The Castle on fire! I wish to heaven I could be more concerned. For *her* sake I am almost glad. Nothing will more effectually put to flight any nervous recollections of her stay in it. Let the old place burn, it will be no loss; and moreover—well, I suppose there is no harm in wishing

that it may give that diabolical cracked young cub a fright, if it does nothing else. But what about Madeline? How am I to get her back? And, by Jove! what is she to go back to? To bare walls and hot cinders? To a renewal of all that she has just begun to forget? She shall *not* go."

"Can't we walk up?" said a very soft voice at his side.

"Walk! No, that you can't, my poor little tired bird. You have flown far enough to-night, and I forbid further flight," said her lover, with the tender authority that is so sweet with all the dew of novelty upon it. "I must think of some plan," and he paused.

"My poor uncle!" suggested Madeline.

"Well, I will go," replied Cumberland, after thinking a minute. "I must not be selfish on a night like this. I must leave you, and go as quickly as I can. You will be safe here, and the inn is quiet now."

“That’s what it is, Maister Cummerland,” cried the landlady’s shrill voice, as Dame M’Killop joined the pair. “They’re a’ awa’ to the Castle. And to think o’ Miss Madeline bein’ owerlooked i’ the clamjamfrie ! But as ye were sayin’, sir, the place is quiet eneuch noo, an’ the room’s free o’ the reek, an’ gif ye’ll stop here——”

“I really think you had better, dear,” said Cumberland.

“Come ben, Miss Madeline—come ben,” continued the good woman. “We’ll mak’ ye nice and cosy ; and—and ye ken me—I’ll hae the bed clean-sheeted directly, and a pan o’ coals. ’Deed and I was that put aboot to see ye amang a’ thae rabble. But Maister Cummerland here kens ; it’s just whan the boat comes in. There’ll be ne’er a whisht noo for the haill o’ the nicht. Sae hie awa’ yoursel’, Maister Cummerland, wi’oot ye’ll bide tae—ye wunna do that ? Aweel, nae doot ye’re wanted at the Castle, and ye’ll

fin' plenty o' company upo' the road. It's little they'll can do when they're theer if a' they say's true—the auld place'll burn like sae muckle peat-stacks ; but nae doot they'll do their best, puir bodies. Come ben, my dear—come ben."

" It seems the only thing to be done," conceded Cumberland, who had been pondering over various plans while the loquacious landlady ran on, but who had reluctantly come to the conclusion that none which he would have preferred were feasible. Then aside to Madeline, " You know this woman ; she is decent and respectable, I believe. You will not be afraid ? You will not be lying awake making yourself miserable——"

" No—not that."

He understood at once. Waking or sleeping, she could not be miserable now.

" I hate to leave you ;" he pressed her closer to his side, for the discreet Mrs

M'Killop had vanished. "It is hard to part so soon, and in such a way; but——"

"Yes—go, go," whispered she; "only remember—for my sake,"—and she hid her face on his shoulder.

"For *your* sake—go on," responded the delighted lover; "for your sake—anything. I guess what you mean, little timid thing; it is the fire you think of. You are afraid I shall be venturesome. You can be bold enough on your own account, eh? But *I* must be a coward. Well, I will, I will, Madeline, for *your* sake." And with many a kiss and promise at length he had to go.

There were, as Mrs M'Killop said, plenty of people on their way to the burning Castle—some impelled by one motive, some by another, but all more or less dominated by the curiosity inseparable from human nature.

By twos and threes they hastened along. Now running, now walking, now looking

behind to see who followed, and now diverging to right and to left in hopes of gaining some little point of eminence from which the blazing towers could be discerned.

At length Cumberland observed a halt that was universal. All who came up to the spot paused, and those who were at any distance behind set off running, in order more quickly to gain the goal. “They can see it from there,” he concluded, and he was right.

The great flaming mass was distinctly visible raging in the high night wind, and it was obvious at a glance that there could be no question of its utter destruction.

“An hour later, and wha kens what might hae been?” observed some one near Cumberland, as he joined the group; “an’ nae doot, wi’oot loss o’ life, it’s a sair sicht to Sir Tammas. A heap o’ property’s there.”

“Property! Wha speaks o’ property?” cried another. “What’s property compared

wi' human life? Sir Tammas will think little o' his bits o' duds gif a' his bairns are safe an' soond."

"A' his bairns!" interposed another significantly. "A' his bairns! There's ae bairn he wadna be that sweer to lose, I'm thinkin'—that laddie Tam."

"Wheesht, man, wheesht! Haud yer tongue, ye gomerel," and Cumberland suspected a nudge and a look in his direction. "Humph!" he thought. "it is no longer Madeline's secret then. I thought as much."

Then a new topic was started.

"Hoo's it fa'n oot, think ye? Maister Marks 'll get his skelps, wunna he?"

"Maister Marks is wi' the leddies at Heatherhill," announced one better informed than the rest, "and they're no' back yet. Na, na, it's no' Maister Marks."

Hereupon followed more conjectures, and then a move. All were beginning to start—some had already gone; when, on a sudden,

a voice rang through the night air, “Lord-sakes ! *I ken the man wha did it !*”

So did Cumberland. The clamour which followed, the interrogations, ejaculations, and general excitement passed by almost unheard and unmarked. His head swam, his brain reeled, he scarcely felt the ground he trod on, and, as in a dream, he heard afar off the name of Madeline’s would-be murderer. Yes—it was, it must be he ; it could be none other than Donald, the discharged and revengeful shepherd. Mastering himself, however, by a determined effort, he awaited further evidence, and as soon as he was sufficiently collected to listen, found it forthcoming in abundance. The speaker was the farm hind, who, it will be remembered, had fallen in with Donald after his dismissal by Sir Thomas, and to whom hints had been let fall to which it was but too plain the present disaster referred.

“ He was wud, clean wud, that was what

Donald was ; and me, I likit ill the leuks o' him, and waur what he said. He bade me look at the auld place, and quo' he, ‘ Ye'll see it nae mair ;’ but for a’ he had a doon broo, and an uncanny glint i’ the e’e, I thocht it was but a word, maybe an angry man’s imprecation like, no’ that he wad gang himsel’ *to do it*. But, Godsakes, believe or no’, *it’s him*. It’s Donald wha’s done the deed !”

As he spoke all were moving on nearer and nearer to a scene that was terrific and appalling beyond anything that Cumberland had ever witnessed. Not all the rolling clouds of blackened smoke which were being whirled about by the furious sea-wind, and which were never allowed to hang for a moment overhead, could hide the wildly leaping flames which darted from roof, spire, and turret ; while the blazing fountains themselves, in every fantastic form and shape, writhing, waving, and sweeping hither and thither as they were driven ; the crash

of falling timber ever and anon mingling with the roaring and bellowing of the vast furnace ; the torrents of sparks which poured and shot into the darkness beyond ; the springing and shooting up of great black beams, as floors and ceilings gave way,—all combined to make the conflagration one of so complete and terrible a nature that no rescue seemed to have been even thought of, and certainly none had been attempted.

So far had the fire gone ere it was discovered, and so helpless had been the bewildered occupants of the Castle at the time it broke out to give any assistance, that it had been considered beyond remedy even from the first ; and now, in a sort of fatalistic resignation and inactivity, Sir Thomas Seaton's household and retainers stood watching from a safe distance, when they were joined by the new arrivals from the port.

Cumberland looked round for Sir Thomas, but he was not to be seen.

“Is it Sir Tammas ye’re seekin’, Maister Cummerland ?” inquired one who knew him, observing Cumberland going from group to group. “He’s doon - by. In yonder, wi’ Maister Tam. They hae ta’en Maister Tam to that bit cottage,” pointing to one of the gardeners’ houses, “and his fayther’s wi’ him.”

“Is he hurt ?” inquired Cumberland. Perhaps he spoke with indifference, for the man looked at him surprised.

“He’s mair than hurt, if it’s true what they say. ’Tis the young laird—him that canna get aboot his sel’,—oo, ay, ye ken him,—they say it’s waur than was thocht upon. The doctor’s wi’ him the noo.”

“How did it happen ?”

“Aweel, I hae my doots. Maybe he was fou, maybe no’. Ye ken he was that way. And they’re sayin’ ower yonder that he had been upo’ the spree the nicht, and the fire brak oot i’ his pairt o’ the Castle (maybe it

had been himsel' whae did it); but onyhoor, he was that sair burned whan they cam till him, that—thonder's the doctor noo." And as he spoke the village surgeon, with Sir Thomas, emerged from the door of the cottage.

They were too evidently engrossed for intrusion, and with native delicacy it was not until their master had been seen to ascend and drive rapidly off in Dr Maclean's own vehicle that there was a general rush towards that gentleman, and an outburst of inquiry.

"He will not live an hour," was the reply. "Mr Cumberland," added the speaker, catching sight of him, "you are a friend of the family; can you step inside with me? The poor fellow is in no pain, and will die quite easy; but there is one thing, he is so far gone he can hardly speak, but he is raving delirious on one point—namely, that his cousin, Miss Madeline Seaton, is still in the 'astle; and when I first came up I found the

belief universal, and the greatest excitement and consternation on her account prevailing. Now, as I had it for a certainty from Sir Thomas's groom that Miss Madeline was down at the pier—”

“Yes, yes ; she is. I left her there. She is all right.”

“Delighted to hear it. I thought it *must* be so ; but the poor lad—could you quiet his mind, do you think ? If you could succeed in making him comprehend you—but I doubt it. The idea has taken possession of him completely.”

“As well it might,” thought Cumberland, bitterly. He had never in his life been asked to do anything so terrible as to enter that cottage. Previously he had resolved to see Tom Seaton as seldom as might be, and when a meeting was unavoidable, to treat him with such unconcealed and stinging contempt as should, as must have, galled the youth to the quick. Even as he came

along, a few minutes before, he had seen himself looking unutterable things, and had known that he could well look them. He had heard his own voice conveying the withering innuendo which should have pierced to the very marrow, and which should have been so unanswerable and impossible to take notice of; and he had almost liked the idea of establishing himself at the Castle in the character of Madeline's betrothed, because of the opportunities it would afford for avenging Madeline's injuries.

And now to be asked to administer a healing balm to Madeline's tyrant!

"I—I don't think it signifies," he said, uneasily. "I really think he had better be let alone."

"As you please, of course," replied the surgeon, shrugging his shoulders. "There is a feeling about having done anything you could for a dead man."

"Dead! He's not dead."

"As good as dead. He may be gone while we are speaking. He is certainly *in extremis*, and it was pitiable to hear him just now; but, however, he may be too far gone by this time to care—"

"If I thought it could do any good," said Cumberland, but with a reluctance that he could not overcome. "Do you think he will know me?"

"*That* I cannot tell. He knew his father, but would hardly speak to him. All he kept repeating was a sort of mutter about 'Madeline.' It was this notion in his head that he could not get over, that 'Madeline' was buried in the Castle; and I think if he had had strength he would almost have struck his father for assuring him she was safe and well. Sir Thomas asked if he would like to see his mother—he is gone for her now—but he got no answer at all, and then by-and-by it was 'Madeline' again. Once it was, 'If Madeline were here——'"

“ Madeline is not here,” said Cumberland, harshly ; “ and I am glad of it.”

“ Madeline is here,” cried the voice he loved close beside him ; “ and I am glad, oh, so glad she is ! I came because I heard about him,—and I had the chance,—I was driven up,—oh, never mind about it, take me in quick—quick,—why are you waiting ?” and there was a reproach in the tone before which Cumberland looked down ashamed. “ Is it there ?” continued Madeline, swiftly. “ Come—come,” and she was hastening in, when he held her back.

“ Madeline, my darling, stay. Let me go first. You do not know what you may see. Doctor, speak to her. Madeline—wait—a moment. I implore—oh, for my sake ! and I gave you any promise you desired for yours——”

“ And I would—any other—but not this.” He held her, but she escaped. He began again ; but she raised her hand to silence

him. He had now to see and know for evermore that look before which the tempter had ever quailed, when in times past the gentle girl, so weak and yet so strong, so timid and yet so fearless, had been tried as by fire, and had not been found wanting.

Without another attempt to stop her, he followed mutely into the cottage.

On a peasant's bed in the wall, humble but decent, Tom Seaton lay dying; death was almost there already. The injuries he had received were of too severe a nature for bodily pain even to be felt, and with closed eyes and feeble breath he lay motionless, while the wasted, miserable life was ebbing away.

“He cannot go like this,” cried Madeline, falling on her knees beside the pallet. “Tom, dear Tom, do you know me? Do you know Madeline—your cousin Madeline? She is come; she is here, beside you, dear; this is her hand—take it—don’t you feel it?”

as the limp fingers had no grasp of hers. “It is Madeline, you know; Madeline, whom you asked for; you wanted her to come, did you not, Tom?” Then lower, “You wanted her to say she forgave you, did you not, dear Tom?” she paused; but he seemed not to hear.

“He hears nothing now,” said the doctor aside to Cumberland, as they stood a little back, while the other inmates of the cottage had been motioned to leave the room at the first. “I doubt she will hardly rouse him now. He does not know she is there, and yet——”

“Hush!” said Cumberland, solemnly. “Let her voice alone speak. It may be”—his own faltered—“there is One above who listens, even if he is past hearing.”

With bent heads they then in silence watched the scene.

“Oh, my poor cousin; it is not yet too late.” The kneeling figure still held the

nerveless hand upon the coverlet, pressing and straining it in her own. “ See, dear Tom ; I have come to you—come on purpose to forgive you, to love you, to pray for you. Pray one little word, one cry, one whisper for yourself. Oh, you don’t need to speak ; only look to Him—tell Him you are sorry—tell Him you have sinned ; tell it only in your heart, Tom. Can you hear me ? Oh Tom, poor, *poor* Tom ; oh, dear Tom. Oh my God, he cannot hear me, and he cannot speak to Thee. Hear me for him ; he has sinned so deeply, so dreadfully, that we know not how to dare to ask, and there is no time ; and oh, what *shall* we do ?—*what shall we do ?* ” And a cry, an anguished, pleading, imploring cry arose with every word.

Still there was no response, no sign.

The death-damp stood upon the brow of that once loathed and dreaded face, the lips that had last been opened before her in cruel

mockings and vile taunts, fell slowly apart—she rose and kissed them ; she held the head upon her bosom ; her tears streamed over the livid cheek.

“ Madeline ! ”

At last he had awokened ; at last he understood.

“ It is her angel,” he murmured. “ She is come—to forgive.” There was a shadow of a smile, a faint sob, and all was over.

Cumberland, dashing the tear from his own eye, stepped forward and reverently led the weeping girl from the room.

## XII.

## CONCLUSION.

“ Smiling noon for sullen morrow,  
Years of joy for hours of sorrow.”

—*Rokeby.*

A MORN as still as heaven, a radiant sunrise, and a sparkling sea succeeded the night of ruin and death.

But for the evidence of what had been, in the shape of the still smouldering heaps of wreckage, and the subdued and sad faces of the bereaved, it would have seemed like a dream that anything so fatally disastrous could have taken place only a few hours before that peaceful smiling dawn.

But there stood the naked, blackened skeleton of the old tower; there smoked the

shapeless masses, still warm ; and there lay the lifeless bodies of the victims—for there were two, and one had fired his own funeral pile. That of the shepherd had been dragged out from beneath a stone archway, which had resisted all the attacks of the flames, and which still stood, narrow, upright, and indestructible. It was beneath Tom's room, and was a mode of ingress and egress which had long been disused, and in consequence the vast iron-bound and studded door was almost, if not quite, immovable. It was conjectured by those who were in possession of Donald's intentions, that after setting fire to the room in which the young laird lay, and removing the bell which hung across the sofa, and by which he had been wont to summon assistance (for all testified that no bell had rung, and the cripple had consequently —awful thought—beheld his doom approach without hope of deliverance), that the incendiary had then, himself, sought to escape ;

but if—as seemed probable to those who knew his savage and vengeful nature—he had lingered to taunt his late confederate and behold his misery, he had not allowed himself sufficient time, and the fire spreading all the more rapidly for the brandy with which it will be remembered the carpet had been soaked, had prevented his return to find another exit, and had finally sent forth such volumes of smoke as had suffocated him.

But little pity or sympathy was felt for the guilty wretch, who had not only sought so horrible a revenge on those by whom he had felt himself aggrieved, but had not even attempted to withdraw from their ghastly fate a whole innocent household, including the woman he had professed to love.

Nor was the mourning for Sir Thomas Seaton's only son and heir much deeper or more general.

He had not, it is true, done a deed which would have handed down his name with

obloquy to all future generations, but he had been known to be what he was—a youth of hopelessly vicious habits and incurable health, and a constant wearing trouble and grief to the best of parents. His being taken out of the world could not but be felt to be nothing short of a relief and benefit to all.

Lady Seaton was, of course, an exception to the rule. She wept genuine tears, and experienced genuine sorrow; but as it is known that the son she bewailed was simply a creature of her own imagination, and that the truth must sooner or later have forced its way even to her, it will be seen that whilst all about her respected her feelings, there were none but felt she had been dealt with mercifully. Things were at such a pass that she could not much longer have continued in ignorance, whereas now she could, to the end of time, believe in the reality of her loss.

Blanche and Flora were not so credulous.

Each, it now appeared, had had misgivings from time to time, though from selfish and indolent motives unwilling to believe, or to take any notice of what they could not help seeing; it would have made them uncomfortable to have worried about their brother.

Now, however, they were ready to confide and call to memory, and though naturally shocked by the frightful nature of his end, it would have been hypocrisy to pretend more. They went about gravely and quietly, and that was all that was expected from them.

Sir Thomas himself it was who, strange to say, was the most communicative person on the sad event, and the recipient of his confidence was Cumberland.

“It is all over now,” he said; “and as there is, alas! no further chance of saving my poor son, so there is no more need for concealment. It has been the skeleton in my cupboard for years. I saw the first

beginnings about three years ago when he was ordered to take stimulants after an illness. He continued, I thought, taking them for a very long time, and in very great quantities, and at last the truth flashed upon me. I set about at once to counteract the evil, and made no doubt I should soon do so, as he was then so young, a mere lad of fifteen. But I was to be soon and terribly undeceived. Time after time I thought I had succeeded, only to find myself foiled, my rules and restrictions evaded, and the people in whom I had placed confidence false to me.

“It was not until my niece, my brother’s daughter, Madeline, you know” (Cumberland smiled). “Of course, of course,” said poor Sir Thomas, recalled to other matters — “ah, what a treasure you will have in that dear girl!” he sighed—then after a pause resumed, “she gave me hope, God bless her for it! From the first I fancied poor Tom was anxious to stand well with her. She was

pretty, bright, pleasant, all that a young man likes to look upon ; and he was getting to be a young man, and I thought, I imagined that her presence inspired him with a desire to reclaim himself. That desire was everything—would have been everything if it had been real,—without it, all that could be done by others availed nothing, as I had, too soon, reason to find. But at first I had strong hopes, and I fear I sacrificed the poor girl in a great measure to them. It never occurred to me that Tom could have been shameless enough to play the part he did. That a son of mine——” he stopped, in emotion too painful for words.

“I am the more grieved that I should have been obliged to add to your trouble,” said Cumberland, with respectful sympathy, “now that I know how great it has been. But Madeline’s being where she was last night, and the general idea that she had been imprisoned——”

"True, true ; it had to be explained. How wonderful and how merciful was her escape ! But for her courage, and but for that timely recollection of the sloping wall—" again words failed ; he could only wring his companion's hand, and each in silence paused before what might have been. Madeline, it will be remembered, had been lodged in the room over Tom's, and to it the flames had first ascended ; no rescue could have availed her had she been where her jailers had meant her to be.

"My only wonder is," said Sir Thomas at length, "why the attempt was not made the night before, and during the night, when we were all in our beds."

"I think I can enlighten you on that point," replied Cumberland ; "my groom has now come forward—he is a good fellow on the whole, and in a very great state of mind now that he finds what he has been contriving at,—he says he took a note yesterday

from your son to this Donald ; he was in the habit of taking these notes, receiving, no doubt, compensation——”

“—— Who gave them him ? Marks ?”

“No ; I believe Marks to be trustworthy, at least to the extent of taking no part in what went on, and only knowing when he was obliged to know. It was Jane the housemaid, Donald’s sweetheart, who was the true go-between ; she gave the notes to my man for Donald, and received his in return ; she cleared away all traces of—of anything that might have excited suspicion ; and it was she who let Donald in yesterday evening, and was to have let Madeline out this morning. She had been indignant on her swain’s behalf at his dismissal, and had been persuaded by him to do anything ; but she is a wretched creature, and is now all penitence and hysterics.”

“ And yesterday’s note ?”

“ Contained a summons to Donald to come

last night when all, including Marks, should be out of the way ; to bring brandy from the usual people,”—Sir Thomas groaned,—“and to be ready for his revenge on the traitor who had betrayed him.”

“The traitor ?”

“Madeline.”

“I see ; and so Donald postponed his revenge on us all in order to secure this first ?”

“And probably saw a better chance of accomplishing his purpose from within than from without the walls.”

“Ah, well,” said Sir Thomas, with a heavy sigh, “God forgive them all ! It is a bitter thing for a father to have this sort of sorrow for his only son ; but it is the Almighty’s will, and I trust to submit. And now,” in a lighter tone—“now about yourself. Your marriage with my niece gives me, I need hardly say, the only happy thought I have in this dark hour. She is worthy of any

man : and you, I think, are worthy of her. That she has been to me the greatest solace, comfort, and help I could have had ever since she came to sojourn under this roof, I may truly say ; I would I had shown my sense of it sooner and better. I have been remiss from no unkindness——”

“ *That I am sure of,*” said Cumberland, warmly.

“ But my life has been so embittered, so destroyed ; and my thoughts being so constantly occupied,” pursued poor Sir Thomas, sorrowfully, “ I fear my other children, and indeed all about me, have had but scant justice. I have had no pleasure in anything. What enjoyment could it bring to me that my worldly concerns prospered, when the son who should have come after me—and the estates are strictly entailed—was leading the life, or would have led the life, of the lowest sot ? What could I care about my farms or my rents ? The more he

had had, the worse use he would have made of it. I shall now be able to rearrange my affairs ; ” and in spite of himself, a brighter look crept over the thin face ; “ and the first thing I do will be to see that the one to whom I owe so much has a suitable marriage portion. As soon as the lawyers can do their part,—but what are your own views ? ”

“ I hope I shall not startle you,” replied Cumberland, looking straight in front of him, and speaking with a nervousness and effort very unlike himself. “ I hope you will not think me presumptuous or unfeeling ; but I have an idea—a plan—and if you will consent——; but, of course, if you disapprove——” he stopped, for signs betokening encouragement, or the reverse.

“ Well ? ” said Sir Thomas, in his kindest voice. He had never liked Cumberland so much as at that moment. There was a hesitation, an anxiety, an eager breathless-

ness in his broken sentences, which showed the reality and power of the feelings within beyond what anything else could have done.

“Madeline does not know anything of what I am going to say,” proceeded Madeline’s lover; and the graceful Cumberland looked positively awkward as, twisting and untwisting his hands like the veriest lout, he stammered and reddened, and could get no farther. At last he made a bolt: “I want to carry off my bride to-day,” he said.

“Good heavens! my dear Cumberland!”

“Yes; but do hear me—do bear with me—let me explain.” He was fluent enough now. “I know how extraordinary it must seem; but indeed, if I do not offend you, I believe I can explain; and I think—I really think—that I shall have you on my side. At any rate, you will see that there is some reason—that I am not altogether selfish. Sir Thomas, Madeline *ought not to remain here*. The sight of these ruins—the

remembrance of last night—the scenes that followed one upon another, and the last of all—— But I need not—I will not remind you. It is only this, that I must beg you to call to mind that there is yet a trial to be gone through——” He paused.

Sir Thomas bent his head.

“ She will break down utterly,” hinted Cumberland.

“ You are right,” said Sir Thomas, after consideration—“ right in so far that here she must not remain ; but we have kind neighbours, friends——”

“ All on the spot. All full of the one topic—all curious and inquisitive, and unrestrained by any feelings of delicacy, since Madeline, being only a cousin, cannot be supposed to care as a sister might. At the same time, every minute she spends alone will be given up to brooding over the past—to reminiscences which she must stifle in her own breast—to haunting visions such as she

would be sure to sink under. Her health would break. You would, I know, blame yourself——”

“I should indeed.”

“Now with me,” proceeded the suppliant, seizing his advantage—“with me Madeline would be under no such weight of secrecy. I know all; we could talk over all; by degrees I would wean her from thinking of it.”

“There is something in what you say, no doubt,” said Sir Thomas, thoughtfully. “Still, my dear fellow, a wedding, and we have not yet had the funeral!”

“But why a wedding in the one sense at all?” insinuated Cumberland. “We can be married without our friends and neighbours knowing; or if they knew—that is to say, when they know—circumstances will explain it. All that needs be said once Madeline is safe away with me is that the fire gave her such a shock that our marriage was hastened,

and was solemnised privately in order to get her out of the way. That will be quite enough when she is not here herself; but if she were staying on——”

“But it will be all over the country at once. You will meet people as you go away.”

“My yacht will be here in an hour. Only yesterday I wired my captain to bring her, and moor her in the bay yonder. I thought we should have had some sails, the weather has been so still till yesterday, and she is a steamer, so we don’t need wind. I had meant to go south in her by-and-by at any rate, when I had hoped, if all had gone well——”

“I understand,” said Sir Thomas. “But still, I hardly know——”

“There she is!” cried Cumberland, joyously. “I have been on the look-out for her since twelve o’clock. My captain telegraphed this morning that they would anchor

off Kildaverock about noon ; he is not much behind his time. We will be off before dusk.”

“ But—but—let me think for a moment ; —how is it to be done ? The minister—the banns——”

“ The minister is not far off—he is with Lady Seaton now. As for the banns, I understand it is but a fine at the worst, which he will send to me. My dear Sir Thomas, I am ashamed to be so urgent, but as you see yourself the circumstances are—are—they *do* excuse me. I know I can prevail with Madeline, if you will but consent. There need not be a soul present but you, and I, and Mr Campbell——”

“ We must have witnesses.” Sir Thomas was rapidly giving way.

“ Your daughters.”

“ Oh, ah—yes. Flora will be ashamed to show herself ; she won’t be sorry not to see you again after her folly—but Blanche will

come, and—oh, of course, any one else will do. Well, if you can persuade Madeline—and since you have got round *me*——” and a smile, a real smile, beamed in his eye.

“ Ah,” thought Cumberland, “ in another year he will be another man. He will look younger, he will renew his interest in life. A burden has been lifted from his back. God help him, that he should feel so, but so it is. He is happier even already.”

But it was impossible to give more than a sigh to the past when the future was all decked with sunbeams.

A few brief days before, and it would have filled the measure of his content to have held the plighted troth of the fair girl he loved, and to have looked forward to a union with her even with its usual accompaniments of din, and feast, and fray; but now, what an infinitely greater delight was in store for him!

To possess his treasure on the spot! To

bear her off—his only, his wholly, and his for ever—within a few hours of the first avowal! To be pestered by no weight of congratulations, to be surrounded by no troops of noisy friends, to be made a fool of by no wedding favour! Eureka! What had he not escaped?

And what had he not gained? The fairest, sweetest maid beneath the sun, the truest heart, the noblest spirit. Gentleness, courage, love and piety, all united in one! How had he dared, how had he ever presumed to lift his eyes, how should he ever be worthy of such an one!

It was a lover's rhapsody, but it sent Cumberland stammering to his knees.

“Why stay here longer when your work is done? You did it well. You watched over him, combated him, guarded him, suffered for his sake. Your task is finished now. Your uncle no longer needs you; you could not even be with him if he did. He

and your aunt go to the Wardlaws, and you would have to be with your cousins elsewhere, and I—you will not forsake me, Madeline? Come with me, for I need you now. You have another to live for, and—another—to show how to live. I will learn of you. You shall teach me, you shall lead me. I will follow and obey. My darling, last night I learned a lesson never to be forgotten; come, Madeline, and perfect it."

• • • • •

Then, when the point was won, he rang another change on it.

" You will not be troubled, you will have nothing to think of. Your uncle and I will see to all arrangements. He is closeted now with your clergyman—and all will be over in a few minutes. Your Scotch law is kind in permitting marriages at any hour and in any place, and Sir Thomas will see that all is done properly, and that you are bound fast to me for ever. There lies the yacht;

and the water, you see, is as blue as heaven, and as smooth as glass. We shall anchor to-night in one of the deep bays of the Isle of Man—to-morrow, away for the Menai Straits and a Welsh harbour—then for the southern shores and the Bristol Channel; and then, Madeline, then, one fine morning, we shall open our eyes to behold a long hill-side of red-brown woods, and a shining, glistening shore; the old avenue of the beeches—I've known them from a boy—the park with the deer—I'll show you the bit of fence I once jumped—and there's the stream we used to fish, and the rhododendron shrubbery, and the peacocks strutting about the terraces—won't they be glad to have me back again! And it was you—you—you little witch, who kept me here! But for you—and the hunting has begun, and there's a meet next week not a mile off—I can scarcely talk about it. I think you will love your home, my darling; I know you

will. I think you will be happy ; I will do my best to make you so. You have loved me for myself, and now you have to see what I can give you, what I can do for you —nay, don't look at me so ; I know what you would say—all such things are nothing —nothing—nothing to"—he became suddenly grave—"to my poor heart," he said, and took her hand, and kissed it as humbly as a slave.

It did not need much of such pleading.

"I am glad, from my soul, that she has consented," said Sir Thomas, when the result was made known to him. "She deserves her lot, and I can say nothing further. We shall never forget her"—he paused. "I know that she will think kindly of us. If a time should ever come when she feels that she could come here again—of course I shall build, and I have plans already in my head —need I say how glad we shall be to see you both ? For the present there had better

not be much intercourse; when time shall have done its work, we shall all meet the more happily; and—God bless her! God bless you both! God for ever bless my dear, *dear Madeline!*"

THE END.

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I am, sir, yours truly,

J. HILL.

## MEDICAL NOTE.

The above speaks for itself. From strict inquiry it appears that the benefit from using Keating's Cough Lozenges, is understated. The operation was a specially severe one, and was performed by the specialist, Dr. H. T. Butlin, of St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Since the operation the only means of relief is the use of these Lozenges. So successful are they that one affords immediate benefit, although from the nature of the case the throat irritation is intense. Mr. Hill kindly allows any reference to be made to him.

## THE UTTERLY UNRIVALLED REMEDY FOR COUGHS, HOARSENESS AND THROAT TROUBLES.

"KEATING'S COUGH LOZENGES" are sold everywhere,  
in Tins, 1/1 $\frac{1}{2}$  and 2/9 each, Free by Post, 15 Stamps.

THOS. KEATING, CHEMIST, LONDON.

*"Dirt flies before it and clothes wash themselves."*—Lady, July 7th, 1892.



# TITAN

PATENT  
**SOAP.**

WASHES WITH **NO RUBBING** WHATEVER.  
**WHITENS LINEN**  
**WITHOUT SUNSHINE OR CHEMICALS**

SOLE MANUFACTURERS:

THE LIVERPOOL PATENT SOAP COMPANY LIMITED, LIVERPOOL.  
London Offices: 9 & 10, Southampton Street, Holborn, W.C.

# Cleaver's Juvenia Toilet Soap

SUPERFATTED AND DE-HYDRATED. Registered No. 99,336.

THE manufacture of this splendid and novel Toilet Soap, the ingredients of which are entirely edible, is conducted on the most approved scientific principles; by which means every species of impurity is carefully eliminated, leaving the completed Soap absolutely pure and neutral. To this is added during the finishing process at least 5 per cent. of Juvenia Cream in an unsaponified condition, the result being that while, during the process of washing, the pores of the skin are completely cleansed, they are anointed with a preparation possessing the most extraordinary powers of penetrating, softening and soothing the skin. This Soap is innocent of any colouring matter, being pure white, and its perfume is most fragrant and delicate.

JUVENIA SOAP, as its name indicates, is manufactured specially with the object of preserving, during succeeding years, the soft skin and delicate complexion of Youth; it also possesses marvellous powers of rejuvenescence, rendering the skin (which from age or other causes may have become deteriorated) soft and supple, and producing a charming and delicate complexion.

To thoroughly enjoy the benefits of F. S. CLEAVER'S JUVENIA PREPARATIONS, the Soap should be used exclusively during the day and the Cream applied before retiring at night.

#### D.R. REDWOOD'S REPORT.

2, Fisher Street, Red Lion Square, London, W.C., March 24th, 1891.

HAVING visited Messrs. CLEAVER'S Soap Works and witnessed the manufacture of their JUVENIA SOAP, we consider it to be OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY. We have drawn samples from bulk of all the ingredients employed in its manufacture and tested them, as well as the Soap itself.

The ingredients are perfectly pure and we cannot speak too highly of them. In the preparation of JUVENIA SOAP, we can see that the same care is adopted in their admixture as in the choice of ingredients. THE SOAP IS PERFECTLY PURE AND ABSOLUTELY NEUTRAL. From first to last we are satisfied with its preparation.

The Soap having been manufactured, scientifically speaking, an addition is made to it which enhances its value as an unguent and an emollient.

JUVENIA SOAP IS ENTIRELY FREE FROM ANY COLOURING MATTER, and contains about the smallest proportion possible of water.

From careful analysis and a thorough investigation of the whole process of its manufacture, we consider this Soap fully qualified to rank amongst THE FIRST OF TOILET SOAPS.

Messrs. CLEAVER have given us full access to their Works at any time, and have authorized us to obtain Cakes of their Soap at any place, and submit them to analysis, in order to ensure the maintenance of its high quality.

T. REDWOOD, Ph.D., F.I.C., F.C.S.  
T. HORNE REDWOOD, F.I.C., F.C.S.  
A. J. DE HAILES, F.I.C., F.C.S.

